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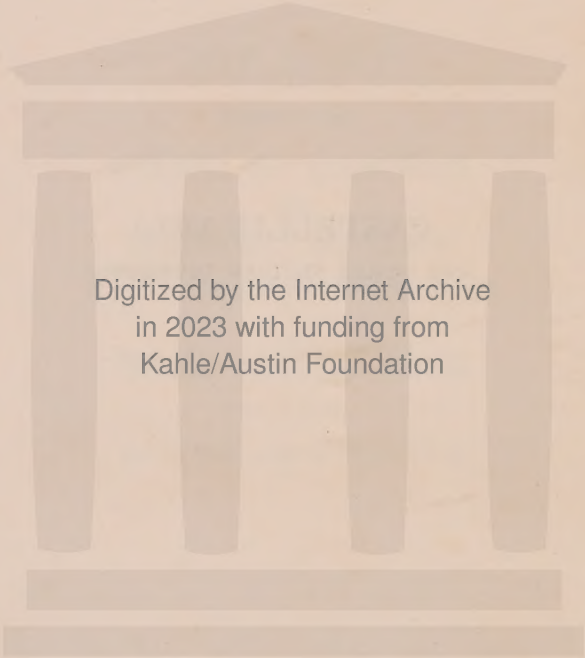
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CASTELLINARIA

AND OTHER SICILIAN DIVERSIONS

BY

HENRY FESTING JONES

AUTHOR OF "DIVERSIONS IN SICILY"

LONDON

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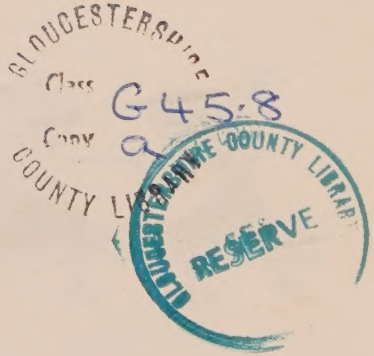

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PREFACE

IT is probable that every book contains, besides misprints, some statements which the author would be glad to modify if he could. In Chapter V of *Diversions in Sicily* it is stated that the seating arrangements of the marionette theatre in Catania would be condemned by the County Council, which I believe to be correct, but, on visiting the theatre since, I find I was wrong in saying that there are no passages ; I did not see them on my first visit because the audience hid them.

Again, in Chapter XVI it is stated that Giovanni Grasso enters in the third act of *La Morte Civile,* whereas he enters in the second act. I have since seen the play several times, and, though it is tedious, it is not so much so as to justify a spectator in thinking any of its acts long enough for two.

In Chapter IV I say that the Government makes an annual profit of £3,000,000 sterling out of the lottery, but I do not say whether this profit is gross or net. There is a paragraph in the *Morning Post,* 12 September, 1911, which states clearly that never since the union of Italy has the State lottery been so productive as in the present year of Jubilee ; the gross yield has been £3,715,088, and the net

gain, after deducting commissions and prizes, £1,489,180.

In Chapter XV it is stated that the words of the play in Signor Greco's marionette theatre in Palermo are always improvised except in the case of *Samson*. This is incorrect. The words of the long play about the paladins are improvised, but they have in the theatre the MSS. of several religious plays by the author of *Samson*, who was a Palermitan, Filippo Orioles. All who are interested in the legends, folklore, popular entertainments, superstitions, and traditions of the people of Sicily are under deep obligations to Giuseppe Pitrè, of Palermo, Professore di Demopsicologia, for his numerous volumes treating of those subjects. In *Spettacoli e Feste Popolari Siciliane* he gives the little that is known of Filippo Orioles, who died in 1793 at the great age of one hundred and six years. The subject of the most famous of his plays is the Passion of Jesus Christ, and its title in English signifies The Redemption of Adam. It has had an immense success throughout Sicily ; it has been copied in MS. many times, printed continually, performed over and over again in theatres, in churches, in the public squares, and in private houses. It was written for living actors, and Signor Greco considers it too long for a performance by marionettes, so when they do it in his teatrino they treat it even more freely than our London managers treat a play by Shakespeare. Copies are difficult to procure because their owners keep them jealously.

Professore Pitrè has, however, lately added to our obligations by publishing a reprint of the play: *Il Riscatto d'Adamo nella Morte di Gesù Cristo;* Tragedia di Filippo Orioles, Palermitano; Riprodotta sulla edizione di 1750; con prefazione di G. Pitrè. Palermo: Tipografia Vittoria Giliberti, Via Celso 93. 1909. A copy of this reprint is in the library of the British Museum.

Many of the friends who have helped me to write this book are named in the following pages, many more are unnamed. I hereby tender my thanks to all of them.

I specially thank Signor Cesare Coppo, of Casale-Monferrato, who, although he is not a Sicilian, has helped me in a manner which I will only hint at by saying that he could give a better account than I can of Peppino Pampalone, of Castellinaria.

To an English friend, Mr. Joseph Benwell Clark, I am indebted for the drawing on the title-page and on the cover. When any of the audience leaves Signor Greco's marionette theatre in Palermo to smoke a cigarette or to drink a glass of water between the acts he receives a ticket with a picture of two fighting paladins, which he gives up on returning. I brought away one of these tickets as a ricordo of the marionettes. The picture is not very clear, because it is printed from a wood-block that has been a good deal worn. Mr. Clark has made from it a drawing which looks more like what the artist originally intended, and I trust that Signor Greco will not be angry with

us for assuming his permission to reproduce the picture.

In correcting the proof-sheets I have had the assistance of my sister, Miss Lilian Isabel Jones, and of my friend Mr. R. A. Streatfeild. I am much obliged to them both for the care which they have exercised.

I must not conclude without saying that Castellinaria still remains as in Chapter II of my previous book, "not so marked on any map of Sicily."

September, 1911

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CASTELLINARIA

CHAPTER I

CHANGES IN THE TOWN

ENRICO PAMPALONE entered the world with a compliment to his godfather, for of all the days in the year he chose to be born on my birthday. Peppino sent me a telegram at once, then a formal invitation to the christening, then a letter, an extract from which I translate:

With immense joy I inform you that Brancaccia has given to the light a fine, healthy boy. Mother and child are well and send you their salutations. We are all beside ourselves with delight at this happy event and my father is talking of his grandson all day long. In accordance with your promise, you ought to hold the baby at the baptism, but, as I absolutely cannot permit you to undertake so long a journey for this purpose, I am sending you a formal document and I beg you to return it to me at once signed with your name in order that the ceremony may take place with as little delay as possible.

We are all looking forward to the pleasure of seeing you playing with your godchild which you will be able to do on your next visit.

The formal document was to the following effect:

WHEREAS I the undersigned have undertaken the duty of acting as godfather to Enrico the new-born son of Giuseppe and Brancaccia Pampalone of the Albergo della Madonna (con giardino) Castellinaria Sicily AND WHEREAS I am detained in London for several weeks and desire that the baptism of the said infant shall not be delayed on that account NOW I DO HEREBY APPOINT Luigi Pampalone the father of the said Giuseppe Pampalone to be my substitute for me and in my name to hold the said Enrico Pampalone his grandson at the sacred font on the occasion of his baptism

and to do all such other acts and deeds as may be necessary in the premises as fully and effectually as I could do the same if I were present in my own person I hereby agreeing to ratify and confirm all that the said Luigi Pampalone shall do by virtue of this writing AS WITNESS my hand this
day of

I filled up the date, signed the document, and returned it to Peppino, and he told me all about the ceremony. By virtue of the christening I became the padrino of Enrico, who became my figlioccio, and I also became the compare of Peppino and Brancaccia and in some spiritual way a member of the family. Peppino sent me a post-card every week, and so I learnt that the baby was the finest ever seen, and weighed more and ate more than any baby that had ever been born in Castellinaria. Then there came information about the first tooth and the first intelligent, if unintelligible, sounds. Soon he was three months old, then six, then a year, and still I had not seen him.

When at last I returned to Sicily, he was more than a year old, and came down to the station to meet me. He laughed as soon as he saw me, threw away his india-rubber ball, and signified that he was to be given to me. Whatever he wants is always done at once and, as he never wants anything unreasonable, the method is working out admirably. I took him from Brancaccia, and he nestled down in my arms, all the time gazing up at me with an expression of satisfied wonder, as though at last he understood something that had been puzzling him. Peppino was present, but effaced himself by helping Carmelo with what he calls my "luggages." I suppose I exchanged the usual greetings with the parents, but they did not count, I had seen them since their marriage ; this time I had come to see Enrico. There was some difficulty about getting into the carriage, because they thought I could not do it unless they took him away, and he did not want to be taken away. When we were settled, and Carmelo was driving us up the zig-zags, I said :

" Of course you don't expect me to know much about babies, not being married or anything—but isn't he an unusually fine child for his age ? "

Brancaccia was much flattered and replied that recently, when they had bought him some new clothes, he took the size usually sold for babies of twice his age. This made Peppino laugh at his wife, and say that the compare might not know much about babies, but he knew how to get on the right side of Ricuzzu's mother.

" Why do you call him Ricuzzu ? " I asked.

" Ricuzzu is Enrico in Sicilian."

" Then I shall call him Ricuzzu also."

" Of course, yes."

The motion of the carriage soon sent the child to sleep. I handed him back to Brancaccia, and looked at her as she sat with him in her arms. She was more beautiful than before, because of something that has eluded the skill of all the painters who have striven to capture it for their hortus siccus of the Madonna and Child, something that Enrico had awakened in her heart, and that I saw glowing in her eyes and throbbing in all her movements.

" Isn't he like Peppino ? " asked Brancaccia.

" He is the very image of Peppino," I replied ; but I noticed that he also had Brancaccia's blue eyes, and was promising to have her black hair.

We arrived at the Albergo della Madonna (con giardino) and Peppino took me up to my room. Brancaccia had been before us, and had put an enormous bunch of flowers in water on the table to greet me. I went out on the balcony, just to make sure that the panorama was still there, and, after putting myself straight, descended into the garden, where I found Peppino waiting for me, and where we were to have tea in the English manner—" sistema Inglese," as Brancaccia said.

The English system is not always in working order at a moment's notice, so we had time for a walk round. The afternoon breeze was conducting a symphony of

perfumes, and, as we strolled among the blossoms that were the orchestra, we could identify the part played by each flower; sometimes one became more prominent, sometimes another, but always through the changing harmonies we could distinguish the stately canto fermo of the roses, counterpointed with a florid rhythm from the zagara. If Flaubert had been writing in Sicilian, he could have said "una corona di zagara," or, in English, "a wreath of orange-blossoms," and he need not have worried himself to death by trying to elude the recurrent "de" of "une couronne de fleurs d'oranger." There was also music of another kind coming from a passero solitario (the blue rock thrush) who was hanging in a cage in a doorway. We spoke to him, and he could not have made more fuss about us if we had been the King of Italy and the Pope of Rome paying him a visit.

I said, "Aren't you pleased with your beautiful garden, Peppino?"

He replied, "Yes, and other things too. Sometimes I am cross with my life; but I think of Brancaccia and the baby, and I look around me, and then I says to myself, 'Ah, well, never mind! Be a good boy!'"

Presently we came to a fountain which, when I turned a tap, twisted round and round, spouting out graceful, moving curves, and the drops fell in the basin below and disturbed the rose-leaves that were sleeping on the water. I also found an image of the Madonna and Bambino in a corner, with an inscription in front promising forty days' indulgence to anyone who should recite devoutly an Ave before it. I understood this as well as one who is not a Roman Catholic can be said to understand such a promise, and better than I understood another image to which Peppino called my attention. It was a small coloured crockery S. Giuseppe, standing on the top of the wall and looking into the garden, protected by a couple of tiles arranged over him as an inverted V, and held in place by dabs of mortar.

I said, " Why do you keep your patron saint on the wall like that ? "

He replied that it had nothing to do with him. The land over the wall belongs to the monks, and they put the saint up to gaze into the garden in the hope that Peppino's father might thereby become gradually illuminated with the idea of giving them a piece of his land ; they wanted it to join to their own, which is rather an awkward shape just there. The influence of S. Giuseppe had already been at work four years, but Peppino's father still remained obstinately unilluminated.

Carmelo brought the tea and set a chair for Ricuzzu, who has his own private meals like other babies but likes to sit up to the table and watch his father and mother having theirs, occasionally honouring their repast by trying his famous six—or is it seven ?—teeth upon a crust, which he throws upon the ground when he has done with it. So we all four sat together in the shade of the Japanese medlar-tree and talked about the changes in the town since my last visit.

First Peppino repeated something he had told me last time I was there, before Ricuzzu was born. It was about the horror of that fatal night when he heard his father crying in the dark ; he went to his parents' room to find out what was the matter, and heard the old man babbling of being lost on Etna, wandering naked in the snow. Peppino struck a light, which woke his father from his dream, but it did not wake his mother. She had been lying for hours dead by her husband's side.

When the body was laid out and the watchers were praying by it at night, the widower sat in a chair singing. He was not in the room with the body, he had his own room, and his song was unlike anything Peppino had ever heard ; it had no words, no rhythm, no beginning and no end, yet it was not moaning, it was a cantilena of real notes. It seemed to be a comfort to him in his grief to pour these lamenting sounds out of his broken heart. All the town

came to the funeral, for the family is held in much respect, and there were innumerable letters of condolence and wreaths of flowers. When it was over, Peppino wrote a paragraph which appeared in the *Corriere di Castellinaria :*

A tutte le pie cortesi persone che con assistenza, con scritti, con l'intervento ai funebri della cara sventurata estinta, con adornarne di fiori l'ultima manifestazione terrena desiderarono renderne meno acre il dolore, ringraziamenti vivissimi porge la famiglia PAMPALONE.

He showed me this and waited while I copied it. When I had finished he went on, talking more to himself than to me :

" The life it is not the same when we are wanting someone to be here that is gone away. When we were young and this person was living, things it was so ; now we can understand this person who is gone, and things it is other. This is not a good thing. Now is the time this dear person should be living ; now would we be taking much care."

For many weeks they feared lest the father might follow the mother, but he began to take a new interest in life on the day when Peppino brought home his bride, and when Ricuzzu was born he soon became almost his old self.

" Things it is like that," said Peppino ; " the young ones are coming to dry the eyes that have tears in them because the old ones are going away."

Brancaccia's attention was occupied by the tea and the baby, and by trying to follow Peppino's talk. He has been giving her English lessons and, though she has not yet got much beyond saying, " Me no speakare l'Inglese," she is quick enough to know what he is talking about, especially as she has heard most of it before. She now said a few words in dialect, evidently reminding him of something, and he at once began to tell me about their wedding tour. He had told me some of it last time I was there, and how he had wanted to take his bride to England and show her London, but they had not time enough, and that journey

has been put off for some future occasion. They went to Venice, which was a particularly suitable place, because his cousin Vanni was there with his ship, the *Sorella di Ninu*, unloading a cargo of wine ; they crossed by night to Naples, and Peppino showed Brancaccia Pompeii and all the sights ; then they went to Rome for a few days and on, through Florence, to Venice. They stayed there a week, and then Vanni, having unloaded his wine, took them down the Adriatic and brought them safely home again.

" It was sun," said Peppino, " and we was in Venice, Sammarco Place, where is—how speak you the colomba ?—Excuse me, it is the dove. And there was different other people also—love-people, the young ones that go to the field in the spring to take the flower Margherita, and to be pulling the leaves to know the future, plenty many ; also sposi, and some that bring the macchina to make the picture, and the bride was to be standing with the colomba in the hand. She put the grain in the hand, and would have a colomba that was with his feet in her finger and eat the grain ; but the bridegroom was not clever to take the photograph and the colomba was—what is it ?—he was finish his grain and flied away, and she was telling to her sposo :

" ' Now you are not clever to take the photograph and you shall be obliged to pay for another packet of grain.'

" In the second time, not only a colomba was in the hand but also another one was stopping in the hat very large with the colomba, too large, I am not certain that the bridegroom was able to take all the photograph."

Whereupon Brancaccia interposed, producing the result, and I exclaimed :

" Why, it is Brancaccia herself ! I did not know you meant that this happened to you. I thought you were telling me about other sposi, not about yourselves."

Then they laughed together, and I saw that Brancaccia, by showing me the photograph, had let out more than was

intended, unless perhaps it was all intended ; either way, no harm was done, and I was allowed to put the picture in my pocket.

Carmelo came to clear away the tea, and I said :

" It seems to me, Peppino, that you have a new waiter. What has become of Letterío ? "

" Ah ! you do not know about Letterio. Now I shall tell you."

At this point it became necessary for Brancaccia to disappear somewhat suddenly with the baby.

" It was festa," said Peppino, " and Letterio was drinking and his friends were telling to drink some more, and he was drinking plenty much. Then was he going out in a very hurry and was telling that he would be married very directly and was meeting a girl and was telling : ' Please, you, marry me this day.' And the girl was telling : ' Go away, Letterio, you are a drunk man.' And he was finding another girl and they was telling the same things—plenty girls—all that day. Afterwards many weeks are passing and Letterio don't be asking to be married, he was telling always that he would not be married never, never, never ; also with the suspicion that no girl would take him. Excuse me, it is like the man who was fell down from the horse and was telling that he was go down—was not fell down. And it was festa again and Letterio was drinking plenty much again and was going on the street again and was meeting a girl again and was telling : ' Please, you, marry me very directly.' And the girl was replying : ' Yes.' "

" But surely," I exclaimed, " surely they were not so silly as to get married when he was sober, were they ? "

It seemed, however, that they were. To save the expense and avoid the chaff that would have attended a marriage in Castellinaria, they went to the next village for a couple of days and returned married.

" But when the man," said Peppino, " must be finding the courage in the bottle, this is not a good thing. The

courage for the happy marriage must be in the heart We know that good wine it is sincero, it makes to be speaking the truth ; yes, very likely. But the wine it is sometimes traditore, it can also be telling the—what is bugia ? Excuse me, it is the lie."

" And so Letterio is married ? "

" Look here, he was married. Now I shall tell you. Oh ! what a bad woman she was ! Impossible to keep her in the albergo. ' Please go away, Letterio ; I am very sorry ; you and your wife also.' And went away, to his home in Messina and his wife also. In the winter was coming the disaster, the terremoto, the earthquake, and the city was finished to be consumed and the train was bringing the fugitives all day and all night. I was down to the station, Brancaccia was making ready the beds, Carmelo was driving them up and was bringing more and then more—broken people, also whole people, all without nothing, very undressed, and the albergo was became a hospital, a refugio, and the doctors were committing operations upon them in the bedrooms and were curing them and curing them till they died and went away in the cimitero—Oh ! it was very pitiful—and sometimes they were repairing them and sending them away in the train. And I was making the journey with the hopeness to un-dig Letterio. During three days was I searching the mournful ruins of Messina but I don't be finding Letterio, nor alive nor dead, nor his wife, and I am unhappy ; also Brancaccia is unhappy. This is why she was now going away with Ricuzzu."

" Oh ! I thought probably the baby had——"

" Yes, many times that is the explication, but this time it is other ; it is that she don't like to be hearing the story of Letterio. I shall tell you that Brancaccia is a gentle person, very tender in the heart."

" Yes," I agreed, " of course she is. But are not you both making too much of this ? You could not have known there would be an earthquake in Messina. If there was to

be one it might have been in some other city, and they would not have been destroyed."

"Look here; perhaps she was not a so bad woman; perhaps some day she would be making a little Ricuzzu and would be learning to be a good woman."

"She might learn very slowly or not at all; and think of her poor husband all the time!"

"Let us talk of something other. Do you remember Alfio Mascalucía?"

"Perhaps; what did he do?"

"You were always calling him Bellini."

"In the barber's shop opposite? Of course, I remember him, but I had no idea he had such a magnificent name or I never should have dared to take liberties with it."

I remembered him very well. I remembered going into the shop one day and he was alone, busy writing at a table in the corner. He said he was composing a polka. He had ruled his own staves because, like Schubert, he could not afford to buy music paper; he wanted all the money he could save to pay a publisher to publish his polka—just as we do in England—and if it succeeded his fortune would be made. I felt a sinking at the heart, as though he was telling me he had been gazing on the mirage of the lottery until he had dreamt a number. He had filled about two pages and a half with polka stuff, but had not yet composed the conclusion.

"You see, what I must do is to make it arrive there where the bars end" (he had drawn his bar lines by anticipation); "that will not be difficult; it is the beginning that is difficult—the tema. It does not much matter now what I write for the coda in those empty bars, but I must fill them all with something."

I said, "Yes. That, of course—well, of course, that is the proper spirit in which to compose a polka."

As I had shown myself so intelligent, he often talked to me about his music and his studies; he had an Italian translation of Cherubini's *Treatise*, and had nearly finished

all the exercises down to the end of florid counterpoint in four parts. His professor was much pleased with him, and had congratulated him upon possessing a mind full of resource and originality—just the sort of mind that is required for composing music of the highest class. He explained to me that counterpoint is a microcosm. In life we have destiny from which there is no escape; in counterpoint we have the canto fermo of which not a note may be altered. Destiny, like the canto fermo, is dictated for us by One who is more learned and more skilful than we; it is for us to accept what is given, and to compose a counterpoint, many counterpoints, that shall flow over and under and through, without breaking any of the rules, until we reach the full close, which is the inevitable end of both counterpoint and life.

I called him Bellini because he told me that the composer of *Norma* had attained to a proficiency in counterpoint which was miraculous, and that he was the greatest musician the world had ever known. This high praise was given to Bellini partly, of course, because he was a native of Catania. London is a long way from Catania, and in England perhaps we rather neglect Italian music of the early part of last century. Once, at Casale-Monferrato, I heard a travelling company do *I Puritani;* they did it extremely well, and I thought the music charming, especially one sparkling little tune sung by Sir Giorgio to warn Sir Riccardo that if he should see a couple of fantasmas they would be those of Elvira and Lord Arturo. Alfio may have been thinking of the maxim, "Ars est celare artem," and may have meant to say that Bellini had shown himself a more learned contrapuntist than (say) Bach, by concealing his contrapuntal skill more effectually than Bach had managed to conceal his in the *Mass in B minor.* While my hair was being cut I examined the polka with interest; it was quite carefully done, the bass was figured all through and the discords were all resolved in the orthodox manner; after the shop

was shut he came over to the albergo and played it to us on the piano in the salon. I should say it was a very good polka, as polkas go, and certainly more in the manner of the Catanian maestro than in that of the Leipzig cantor.

"And what about Alfio?" I asked. "Did he also marry a bad woman?"

Then Peppino told me the story of the Figlio di Etna. He called him this because he came from a village on the slopes of the volcano, where his parents kept a small inn, the Albergo Mongibello, and where also lived his cousin Maria, to whom he was engaged. In the days when he used to talk to me about his counterpoint, Alfio was about twenty-four, and always so exceedingly cheerful and full of his music that no one would have suspected that his private life was being carried on in an inferno, yet so it was; a widow had fallen in love with him, and had insisted on his living with her. "And look here," said Peppino, "the bad day for Alfio was the day when he went to the house of the widow." He was too much galantuomo to resist; he had not forgotten Maria but he thought she could wait, and besides, he was at first flattered by the widow's attentions and amused by the novelty of the situation; but he never cared for the widow, and soon his chains became unbearable. As Peppino said, "There don't be some word to tell the infernalness it is when you are loved by the woman you hate." He exercised his contrapuntal ingenuity by devising schemes for circumventing this troublesome passage in the canto fermo of his life without breaking any of the rules, and finally hit upon the device of running away. So many men in a similar difficulty have done the same thing, that his professor, and even the stern Cherubini himself, would have condemned the progression less on account of its harshness and irregularity than because of its lack of originality. He scraped together about fifty francs and disappeared to Livorno where he soon found work in a barber's shop, cutting hair, trimming and shaving beards and whiskers,

and making wigs for the theatre. He wrote the widow two letters containing nothing but conventional compliments, and displayed his resource and originality by posting one in the country and sending the other to a friend in Genoa who posted it there.

After about three months of freedom, counterpoint and hair-dressing, he was sent for to return to his village for a few days and vote ; Peppino anticipated my inquiry about the money for the journey by protesting that he knew nothing about the details of politics. However it may have been managed, Alfio got leave from his employer, went home and voted. He said nothing about the widow, but he promised Maria to return and marry her in a year, when he should have saved enough money. He did not know how he was going to do it, but he had to say something. Then the silly fellow must needs go for a day to Castellinaria to salute his friends in the barber's shop there —just as murderers seem never to learn that it is injudicious to re-visit the scenes of their crimes. Naturally the widow heard of his being in the town, they met in the street and had a terrible row. What frightened poor Alfio most was a sort of half persuasion that perhaps he had behaved badly to her. But he did not relent ; he returned to his village, bade farewell to his family, embraced his adorata mamma, renewed his promise to Maria, went down to Catania, entered the station and turned pale as he saw the widow sitting in a corner with a parcel and a bundle.

" Where are you going ? "

" I am coming with you."

He had let out that he would return to Livorno in a few days, and she had resolved to accompany him, wherever he might be going. She had sold all her furniture in a hurry and come to Catania, knowing that he must start from there. She waited for him inside the station when it was open, outside when it was shut ; she had to wait four days and four nights. She refused to leave him. She bought her own ticket and travelled with him. They

settled down in Livorno—if that can be called settling down which was a continual hurly-burly ; the only repose about it appeared in the bar's rests to which poor Alfio's counterpoint was now reduced. He grew irritable, abused her and beat her ; but she was one of those women who love their man more passionately the more he knocks them about. Maria sent him a post-card for his onomastico, and the widow got hold of it. This led to his leaving the house for a few nights, but she had always taken his money for housekeeping, so he had not enough to leave the town, and she came to the shop in the daytime and made such a disturbance that he was frightened into returning. He dreamt of disguising himself in one of his own theatrical wigs and escaping so, but the idea was too like some of those contrapuntal combinations which, as Cherubini says, may be employed in a study-fugue, but which in practical music, as in practical life, have to be weeded out by artificial selection.

Then his mother fell ill, and the family sent him the money to go home to embrace her. The widow had put some of his money by for an emergency. She was not going to lose sight of him again, especially now that she knew about Maria ; she bought a ticket and came too. They spent the night at her brother's house in Catania and Alfio was to go next day to his village. She said she would come too, he said that nothing would induce him to take her with him. She implored and stormed and spat and swore, knowing all the time she could not appear in his village as belonging to him, and fearing that he intended to manipulate his going home alone into a way of escape. She pretended to acquiesce but, in the morning, as he was passing through the Quattro Canti she was there, disguised as a man in her brother's clothes, and before Alfio could recognise her she had stabbed him in the back and he fell down dead.

" But, Peppino," I exclaimed, " this is a worse tragedy than the other. What a horrible woman ! "

"The Padre Eterno was very angry that day when he made the bad woman."

"Where is she now?"

"In prison."

"That is no satisfaction to poor Alfio."

"No; and not satisfaction to his family. His mother died of grief during that they were telling her his murder."

"And Maria?"

"Maria is telling that she would becoming a monkey-woman."

"What do you mean?"

"How do you say in English the lady-priest, the monaca?"

"Oh! yes,—a nun. But it seems a pity she should take such a serious step. It is a dreadful story, Peppino."

"Yes; and I am fortunate because I also meet the bad woman."

"Was Alfio's widow a friend of yours?"

"No; I meet her in London."

"I'm glad she did not stab you."

"Not the widow—some other woman."

"I don't quite understand."

"It is difficult to understand—difficult to be sure when it is the bad woman. The bad woman is like mosquitoes—not wanted but would not go away."

"Tell me what happened."

"When I was in London, I was at this place where is the—please, what is campo? No, not campo, but where is the beast with the horn in the head—the cervo?"

"Ah! yes, the deer. You mean the Zoological Gardens."

"No, no. This place where is the villa with the red palazzo and the chief labours of painting and beds and chinesy images are over the place where is coming the fire in the winter-time, and on the wall is also the armatura and the deer it is in the trees on the side of the river."

"I believe you mean Hampton Court."

" Yes, and was telling to the lady—she was a very kind lady——"

" But please, what lady ? Alfio's widow was not at Hampton Court ? "

" She was the wife of the plumber."

" I am afraid I am very stupid, Peppino, but I don't seem to get hold of it. Who is the plumber ? "

" I meet him at Margate ; also his lady, his wife ; they invite me to their house ; I accept their invitation."

" But Margate is not Hampton Court."

" No, they inhabit Hampton Court ; they go to Margate for the villeggiatura, for the—how do you say ?—for the baths of the sea."

" Oh, now I understand. You met them at Margate and they invited you to call on them at their house at Hampton Court."

" Of course, yes. And when I arrive, the husband, the plumber, he went away with his tools for his work in a sack, and his lady she says to me, ' Please sit down.' And we talk together. She was a very kind lady. And presently —she was on the sofa by the window and I was in a chair by the fire—presently her husband return. I was like a fish not in his water, but oh ! it was my salvation. Why must he be leaving us together ? She was a very kind lady. And then to be returning without noise, so soon and so sudden. Do you think—? "

I did not know. It looked rather like it, but the psychology of the Hampton Court plumber resembles the Italian music of the early part of last century in that it is but little studied among us. So I congratulated him on his escape, and inquired whether any of Alfio's compositions had been published.

" Alfio don't be writing no compositions."

" He told me he was composing music."

" Alfio never compose something. Too busy. Look here, the student that shall be always making the exercise he don't be never composing the music."

"But that polka? Don't you remember he came over to the albergo and played us his polka?"

"Alfio don't write the polka. His professor gave him the polka to copy for study."

"Oh! I see. Well, now don't you think we have had enough tragedies? Has nothing pleasant happened in the town since——? What a stupid question! Here is Brancaccia bringing the answer."

Brancaccia not only brought the baby, she also brought to show me the clothes in which he had been christened, just as on my last visit, before he was born, she had brought and shown me the clothes in which she had been married. I have a confused recollection of fine muslin and embroidery and pretty gay ribbons. I remember more clearly her necklace of Sicilian amber which has been in the family for generations and, in the natural order of things, will one day be passed on to the wife of Ricuzzu. Each piece of amber is circular, flat underneath and convex above, and is surrounded with a fine golden band whereby it is joined to the next, side by side. The two smallest, at the back of the wearer's neck, near the clasp, are about as big as threepenny bits, and the pieces increase in size through sixpences, shillings, florins, half-crowns, until the one in the middle on her breast is nearly as large as a five-shilling piece. They are all sorts of colours, honey-yellow, rich orange, Venetian red, brown sherry, some clear and some clouded, some have insects in them, some when held properly in the sunlight, have a fluorescent, hazy tinge like the blue in a horse's eye, some are a peacock-green and others a deep purple. The largest piece is green, and has objects in it which Brancaccia says are cherry-blossoms. Peppino accepts his wife's view because it amuses him to call this piece The Field of Enna, where Proserpine was gathering flowers when Pluto carried her off, and these are the flowers she was gathering. But he knows that this kind of amber is called Simetite, because it is the fossilised resin of some prehistoric tree that used to grow

on the upper reaches of the river Simeto which rises at the back of Etna, beyond Bronte, and falls into the sea near Catania ; whereas Castrogiovanni, which is the modern Enna, is not on the Simeto. Castrogiovanni is, however, not far from the upper part of another river, which falls into the Simeto near the sea. And he argues that if The Field of Enna was washed down the Castrogiovanni river it may still have exuded from a tree of the same kind as those that used to grow on the Simeto, and in any case it had to pass through the mouth of the Simeto before reaching the sea, and so it may be called Simetite. Having got into the sea, it was thrown up in a storm or found in a fisherman's net.

Then I must be shown the mule, with his beautiful harness, and the new cart which Ricuzzu had received as a birthday present from his grandfather ; so we went to the stable. The cart was painted with the story of Orlando's madness, showing first how he had gone to bed in his boots ; or rather how he lay outside a bed that was too short for him with all his armour on, like a lobster on a dish. This occurred in the house of a contadino who was standing with a lighted candle in his hand and had brought his wife. They did not know to whom they were speaking, and were telling him that the room had been occupied last by a knight and his lady and that the lady, in gratitude for their hospitality, had given the contadina a bracelet, saying that she had received it as a present from Orlando. And Orlando was exclaiming :

" Show me that bracelet."

In the second picture the contadina had brought the bracelet, and Orlando was sitting up, contemplating it and saying :

" It is the bracelet which I gave to Angelica. The last occupants of this bed must have been that fatal woman and her husband Medoro. I am Orlando Paladino."

These were the two panels on one side of the cart. On the other side, the third picture showed Orlando, who had

got off the bed, and was standing up delivering a long "Addio" in the manner of Othello—one could almost hear the words: "Orlando's occupation's gone." The contadino and his wife were furtively leaving the room, perhaps because poetry bored these simple folk, but it may have been because Orlando, having no further use for his arms, was punctuating his speech by throwing away first la Durlindana, next his shield, then his helmet, his cuirass, front and back, his leggings, and his shirt.

In the last picture he had nothing on but a pair of short white drawers; he had gone quite mad and had knocked down the house; its fall revealed a smiling landscape across which peasants and sheep were escaping, and the trees shook with the violence of his fury. He was catching some of the peasants and throwing them away, shouting and cursing that fatal woman, and struggling to drown the music and the drum, which made a crescendo till the curtain fell. I should have recognised it even if the pictures had not had titles, because I had recently seen it in a marionette theatre.

The harness cost as much as the cart, and it took a month to make it. It was of leather, wood and metal, tasselled with gold and silver and wool of many colours; here and there were sparkling bits of looking-glass, and little pictures of ladies; here and there circles and crescents of blue and red felt, and little pictures of cupids and angels. Other spaces were covered with silver tinsel and spangles. There were spread eagles and horses' heads and two bouquets of artificial flowers. There was a St. George and the Dragon carved in wood and painted, there were bells and ribbons, and two trophies of coloured feathers, one for the head and another for the back, each more magnificent, and three or four times larger, than the plume which the maresciallo dei carabinieri wears with his gala uniform.

CHAPTER II

FESTA RIMANDATA

One day the bells were ringing for the festa of S. Somebody, but it was not really his day. Peppino told me that his proper day had been stormy or unsympathetic or the people had had some crops to get in or something else to do, and so the saint had had his festa shifted ; or it may have been because some greater festival had fallen on S. Somebody's day owing to the mutability of Easter or for some other reason. I had been wishing I could have been at Castellinaria for the first anniversary of Ricuzzu's birth, I ought to have wished to be there for the festa of S. Enrico, but I did not know when it fell, nor did Peppino ; but if festas might be transferred in this easy way, perhaps we might keep it now and find out afterwards to what extent it had been shifted. It would have been no use consulting the baby—besides, he would have been sure to agree—so as they were not very busy in the albergo it was decided that next day we would keep the onomastico of Ricuzzu and his padrino by driving down to the shore, throwing stones into the sea, and perhaps eating a couple of peperoni with a drop of oil and vinegar and a pinch of salt.

Next morning the mule, the cart and the harness were brought out ; it was the first time they had all been used together, and when Peppino and Carmelo had harnessed the little beast, he trotted up and down in the sunshine as proud as though he had been clothed in a rainbow and freshened up with dewdrops.

I said : " Do you keep the onomastico of the mule also ? It seems to me that he is as much pleased with himself as anyone. He looks as though he thought everything belonged to him. What is his name and when is his day ? "

"We call him Guido Santo," replied Peppino. "We will make it his festa also and afterwards we shall be discovering his day in the calendario."

"And if it comes to that," I said, "why shouldn't we include you and Brancaccia?"

"Bravo!" shouted Peppino, "and Carmelo also. Festa rimandata per tutti!"

A chair for Brancaccia and the baby was tied in the cart among a multitude of parcels and baskets about which I thought it better not to inquire. Peppino and I sat on the floor in front, like the driver and his mate on an illustrated post-card, with our feet dangling down between the shafts among the mule's hind legs. Carmelo started us off and got in behind, and we drove to the sea, not the way to the station and the port, but by the road that descends on the other side of the headland. We passed by groves of lemon, star-scattered with fruit and blossom and enclosed in rough walls of black lava; by the grey-green straggling of the prickly pears and by vines climbing up their canes. We caught glimpses of promontories dotted with pink and white cottages and of the thread of foam that outlines the curve of the bay where a train was busily puffing along by the stony, brown beach, showing how much a little movement will tell in a still landscape. Behind the shimmering olives, first on one side, then on the other as we turned with the zig-zags of the dusty road, was the purple blue of the sea flecked with the white sails of fishing-boats and with the crests of whiter waves. Every-one we met looked at us and admired the splendour of the cart and the sparkling newness of the harness until they caught sight of Brancaccia and the baby, and then they saw nothing but their beauty. We met the man who was riding up from the fishing village with baskets of fish for the town because it was Friday. Peppino and Carmelo disputed as to the amount he was carrying, and agreed at last that it must be about a hundred kilogrammes, partly by the quantity and partly because it had been

good weather for fishing; when it is bad he cannot bring more than thirty, forty or fifty.

Peppino told me that our mule was the offspring of an ass and a mare. These, he says, are better than those born of a horse and a she-ass. Mules can be male or female, and Guido Santo was a male but, except for the fact that the males are stronger than the females, the sex of a creature that is incapable of reproducing itself is not a very interesting subject. Our mule was still young, and had not yet learnt the use of corners, nor how to pass things in the road. Carmelo often had to get down and continue his education. After one of these lessons he lighted his pipe with a sulphur match which tainted the morning air and offended Ricuzzu; but almost immediately we came to a forge and the blacksmith was striking a piece of iron on his anvil.

"Ricuzzu bello," said Brancaccia, "listen to the pretty music."

And Ricuzzu listened and laughed; the pleasant acid flavour of the note as it followed us corrected the sulphur, and he put up his face for a kiss. Brancaccia knew how to smooth away his troubles and how to deserve his thanks.

We passed a boy singing, and I said how pleasant it was to hear a real Sicilian melody sung by a modern Theocritus about the delights of his own country. But Peppino soon put a stop to that. The boy was one of a theatrical company that had arrived in the town from Piedmont where the song was popular; he did not know all the words, but it contained these:

Mamma mia, dammi cento lire
Chè in America voglio andar.

Mother darling, give me a hundred lire
For I want to be off to the States.

"Are they acting here?" I asked.

"They are reciting *Il Diavolo Verde*. You don't will go and see this evening?"

" If Brancaccia is not too tired, let us finish up Ricuzzu's festa by a visit to the theatre."

The baby was wide awake all the time, observing everything, and much interested. I said :

" I believe Ricuzzu understands that we are keeping his onomastico."

" Of course, yes," replied Peppino ; " Ricuzzu very intelligent."

" I believe he even understands that it is not S. Enrico's day, and appreciates the idea of keeping his festa when it is convenient for everyone."

" Of course, yes ; the idea is the thing. Always it is the idea. Did you know the idea of the girl who went to confess ? "

" What is that ? "

" Not now. Please expect. I am too much busy with Guido Santo. Please, when we shall be there."

On arriving at the shore we first found a cove where Brancaccia and Ricuzzu could be comfortable while Peppino, Carmelo and I went a little way off into a secluded place behind the rocks, undressed and bathed. We swam round and saluted the mother and child in their cove, but could not get near enough to splash them because the water was only a few inches deep near the shore and the proprieties had to be observed. When we were tired of swimming we came out and dressed. Then I took the baby while Peppino and Brancaccia went round into our dressing-room and he superintended her bath. Carmelo, in the meantime constructed a fireplace among the rocks and got his cooking things and all the parcels and baskets out of the cart. Peppino and Brancaccia returned, and we found a shallow, shady pool with a sandy bottom, undressed Ricuzzu, and put him into it. I observed that the baby's clothes were reefed with safety pins, but I said nothing about it, thinking the reefs could be let out when he had attained twice the age he was when they were bought. The proprieties did not matter with this bather, who

soon learnt how to splash us. It may have been his padrino's vanity, but I thought he laughed loudest when he succeeded in splashing me.

The couple of peperoni had swelled into a regular colazione. First, of course, we had pasta, this time it was called lingue di passeri (sparrows' tongues), they have fifty different names for it according to its size and shape, but it is always pasta. Carmelo made a sauce for it over his fire with oil, onions, extract of tomatoes, and certain herbs; the recipe is a secret which is to be imparted to Ricuzzu when he is fifteen, but I think Brancaccia has already guessed it, though she is not supposed to know. As a rule, I try to get only half as much pasta as a Sicilian takes, and of that I can only eat half, but on this occasion, either because of Carmelo's cooking or the sea breeze, or the presence of Ricuzzu, I ate it all, and it made me feel like Rinaldo after the terrible fight in which he kills the centaur and stands at the wings panting for breath.

The pasta was followed by bacon and figs—an unexpectedly delicious combination; the bacon is uncooked and cut very thin, the figs are fresh and ripe, but it would not do in England because, although one could probably find the bacon in Soho, our figs never attain to Sicilian ripeness. Carmelo then surpassed himself with a pollo alla cacciatora, after which we had a mixed fry of all sorts of fish. Peaches out of the garden and cheese followed. Also we drank Peppino's own wine made from the grapes he had planted with his own hands and trodden with his own feet, and there was coffee with the cigarettes.

I said: "I did not know Carmelo was a cook, I thought he was a coachman."

"Also is he a cook. Also the nurse of Ricuzzu. Also a waiter. Very good boy Carmelo. We took him when Letterio went away."

"And Brancaccia is not afraid to have him as Ricuzzu's nurse?"

"Afraid? No. Why?"

" Because he has been in prison for stabbing his friend."

" Oh yes, in prison. But his friend was a bad man, was taking away Carmelo's girl."

" Did the friend marry Carmelo's girl ? "

" Yes, and Carmelo got another girl. Plenty girls very fond of Carmelo. Look here, the girls always are liking the boy that has been in prison."

" Yes ; well, of course, one can understand that. By the by, what was that about the girl who went to confess ? "

" Did you know what is confess ? All right, I shall tell you. The box is inside for the priest behind the railings, and the other place that is open is for the man or the woman that have sinned. And the girl is coming and is saying :

" ' My father, I have sinned. I had the idea to rob my sister of a hen, but I would not do it. What is this ? '

" The father was telling, ' It is a very bad idea.'

" And the girl was repeating that she don't be doing the wickedness, only the idea.

" ' Never mind,' was telling the father, ' it is the idea that is the thing, and you would be fined with five francs to the church to make the Messa and the church would give the Messa for the sin and the sin would be delivered after the Messa.'

" The girl takes from her pocket the five francs and put to the railings. The father is telling :

" ' It is not possible to touch. Please give me from the door.'

" The girl was answering :

" ' Never mind ; you have the idea to take the money and it is the idea that is the thing.'

" Did you understand ? All right, please take to eat. Some more fish ? "

" No, thank you," I replied.

" Please take some more pollo."

" Thank you, Peppino, I have eaten too much already."

" Please take to the drink."

" I have had quite enough, thank you."

" Some more wine ? Do not think about Letterio. You shall not be meeting your dolce cuore—your sweetheart, this day. You have not yet taken one glass."

" Excuse me, I have drunk quite as much as is good for me—much more than a glass—nearly a bottle."

" It is good till you shall drink the three glasses of Noah. Did you know what is the glass of Noah ? All right, I shall tell you."

Then he told me about Noah and the Devil.

The patriarch Noah was working in his field one day when the Devil came along, put his arms on top of the gate, and looking over, said in a friendly way :

" Good morning, Mr. Noah."

" Good morning, Mr. Devil," replied Noah. " And what can I do for you ? "

" Do not let me interrupt ; you seem busy this morning."

" Yes," replied Noah ; " I am planting the vine."

" Oho ! " said the Devil, " but this is rather interesting." So he slipped inside the field and took a seat on a large white stone. Noah went on with his work.

A lion was prowling round and came through the gate which the Devil had carelessly left open. The Devil killed the lion and watered the vine with its blood.

" I wish you wouldn't do that," said Noah testily.

The Devil paid no attention. A monkey dropped down from a tree and came skipping up to them to see what was going on. The Devil killed the monkey and watered the vine with its blood.

" Can't you leave the poor beasts alone ? " said Noah, who had always deprecated cruelty to animals, and was beginning to lose his temper.

The Devil paid no attention. A pig was wallowing in the mud close by—there had been a good deal of rain lately. The Devil killed the pig and watered the vine with its blood.

This was too much for Noah. He shouted : " Haven't

you got any work of your own to do, you lazy devil?" He was so angry he forgot to say "Mr." "You had better go home; your dinner will be getting cold."

"'Hot' you mean," replied the Devil, looking for his hat, which had fallen behind the large white stone. "What an ungrateful husbandman you are! I have been helping you to make your wine. When you have drunk the first glass, you will feel strong and behave furiously. When you have drunk the second glass, you will forget how to think for yourself, you will imitate other people and behave foolishly. When you have drunk the third glass—need I continue? I think not. Good morning."

Whereupon the Devil put his hands into his pockets, tucked his tail up under his left arm and swaggered away, thinking of his next job and whistling "La Donna è Mobile."

"And the glass of Noah," said Peppino in conclusion, "was containing one bottle. Did you understand? All right; I give you a medal."

"I hope it will be a real medal and not like the idea of the girl."

"We shall see. Please take to drink the milk of Ricuzzu."

The baby had had one bottle of milk, but there was another ready for him. I said:

"My dear Peppino, I could not eat or drink another mouthful of anything. I could not even eat a slice of Ricuzzu himself; besides, I don't believe Carmelo knows how to cook babies—not so as to make them really tasty."

Brancaccia understood enough to know we were talking about Ricuzzu. She left off clearing away, and snatched the baby out of Carmelo's arms, whispering to me:

"I know it is all right, but I shall feel safer if I have him."

Peppino, who was lying on his back, observed her agitation out of the corner of his eye and said to me, maliciously speaking Italian so that she should understand:

"If you would like to eat the baby, please say whether

Carmelo shall boil him or cut him up and stew him alla cacciatora."

"Thank you, no. I prefer Ricuzzu alive."

"You are a bad papa," said Brancaccia, "and the compare is a good man."

So she gave me the baby as a reward and slapped her husband's cheek as a punishment. Peppino naturally retaliated, and in a moment they were rolling over and over and bear-fighting like a couple of kittens at play, while Carmelo and I sat and laughed at them, and the baby crowed and clapped his hands and grew so excited I could scarcely hold him.

There came a pause and Peppino said: "My dear, if you will leave off boxing my ears I will tell you a secret."

Brancaccia instantly desisted and went and sat apart to recover herself.

Peppino continued: "I knew the compare would refuse to eat the baby. He does not like our Sicilian dishes. Every time he comes to see us it is a penitenza for him, because he cannot eat food grown in our island. But I know what I shall do. I shall send a telegram to London: 'English gentleman starving in Castellinaria. Please send at once one chop, one bottle of stout.'

"Look here," he continued, suddenly sitting up and becoming serious. "It is the clime. Here is the country not adapted to the beast, few rain, few grass, few beefs, few muttons, and all too thin and the land is good only for the goats and we must be eating such things that are doing bad to the stomaco—the little chickens and the poor fishes and the pasta—not other. In England shall be falling always the rain and plenty grass shall be growing and the beefs and the muttons shall be fat and much nourishment shall come to those who are eating them."

I said that if I could have chops and stout instead of the few odds and ends which Carmelo had managed to scrape together for our ridiculously inadequate luncheon,

of course I should stay at Castellinaria and never go home any more.

So that was settled for the time, and Brancaccia, having put herself tidy, proposed a visit to the grottoes. Carmelo packed up his kitchen and took it off to the cart. On the way he met his cousin, borrowed his boat and came rowing in it—for Carmelo is also a fisherman. We got in and rowed round the promontory and into the caves. The baby was a good deal puzzled, he thought he was indoors, and yet it wasn't right, but he was pleased. When we were tired of the grottoes we rowed back, restored the boat to Carmelo's cousin, packed ourselves into the cart and Guido Santo took us up the zig-zags to Castellinaria after a day which we all enjoyed very much ; Ricuzzu, who understood least, perhaps enjoyed it most, but then this baby enjoys everything. If we could have remanded his festa for a few years, instead of only a few days or weeks or whatever it was, he might have understood more and enjoyed less.

Ricuzzu did not come to the theatre, he was supposed to be tired, so Brancaccia put him to bed and, leaving him with Carmelo, accompanied Peppino and me to see *Il Diavolo Verde.* We took our seats while the fiancée of Don Giuseppe, assisted by her lady's-maid, was endeavouring to make up her mind. The difficulty was that Don Giovanni, the brother of Giuseppe, had sent her a case of jewels and, like Margherita, in *Faust,* she could not resist the temptation to try them on in front of a looking-glass. We saw in the glass the reflection of a devil in green with pink trimmings. He appeared to be standing behind her, looking over her shoulder, but he was not really present ; it must have been a magic mirror. Don Giovanni came and denounced his brother who, he said, was a bastard and no gentleman, proving his words by the production of their father's will written on a sheet of brown paper which he always carried in his belt. This convinced the lady, and she went off with Giovanni. Don Giuseppe,

who had been carried away by armed men, escaped and returned to meditate on the crisis of his life. Remembering that the green devil was a retainer of his family, he summoned him and laid the case before him. This time the devil really came and told Giuseppe that there was a way out of his trouble, but that it would involve (1) the perdition of two souls, (2) the shedding of blood, (3) sacrilege, (4) perjury, and (5) all his courage. Don Giuseppe agreed and the curtain fell.

The next act was in the cemetery in front of the tomb of the father of the two brothers. Don Giuseppe and the green devil came in, carrying another will, engrossed on brown paper, but not executed, a bottle of ink, and a quill pen. They stood in front of the door of the tomb and spoke some sacrilegious words. The door opened and revealed the corpse of the father like a Padre Eterno, standing upright, clothed in white, with a white face, a flowing white beard and white kid gloves. Brancaccia was, I believe, really as much frightened as Don Giuseppe pretended to be and I did not like it. The green devil encouraged his master to approach the corpse, which he did, first dipping the pen in the ink-bottle. He offered the pen and held in a convenient manner the new will which would put everything straight, begging his father to sign it. The corpse slowly raised its stiff right arm, took the pen in its hand and signed the will ; it then dropped the pen on the ground, lowered its stiff right arm and the door of the tomb closed. Except for this, it did not move and it did not speak at all. It was a ghastly scene and the house was as still as though it had been empty.

In the next act we returned to Don Giovanni whom we found playing dice with Fernando at an inn. When Fernando had lost his money and his jewellery and his lands and his castle and his furniture, he played for his wife, and Don Giovanni won her also. Whereupon Fernando wrote two letters to his wife, one, which they sent by a messenger, told her to come to the inn at once, the

other was for Don Giovanni to give to her when she came. Fernando then went away, leaving the coast clear, and the lady entered.

DON GIOVANNI: Donna Inez, I love you.

DONNA INEZ: Silence, Sir. I am here to meet my husband. Where is he?

DON G (*giving her the second letter*): He left this for you.

DONNA I (*reads*): "Dear Inez: We have been playing dice. Don Giovanni has won. You now belong to him. Your affectionate husband, Fernando." It cannot be! 'Tis false! My husband would never behave in so ungentlemanly a manner.

GIOV: On the contrary, Madama. And is not this his handwriting?

IN: Now that I look at it again, it is. Ah, Cielo! Betrayed! Surely, Sir, you do not expect me to consent?

GIOV: Certainly I do.

IN: Never. I am a Spanish lady of high degree.

GIOV: Inez, I love you. Be mine.

IN: Are you of noble birth?

GIOV: Yes.

IN: Are you valorous?

GIOV: Yes.

IN: Don Giovanni (*hiding her face*), I love you!

GIOV: My own, my beautiful one!

IN: There is, however, one little difficulty about which, of course, you could have known nothing. Some years ago I foolishly took an oath. I swore I would be true to my husband during his life.

GIOV: Well, but—let me see—yes, I did bring my sword with me. Suppose I were to step round and run him through the heart—if you don't mind waiting?

IN: I'm afraid it would be troubling you?

GIOV: Not at all. Any little thing of that kind. So glad you mentioned it.

IN: Thanks. I suppose you could not manage to bring it off within sight of the window?

GIOV: I don't see why not. Anyhow, I'll do my best. [*Exit* GIOV.

IN: Waiter! (*Enter* WAITER.) Lay the cloth for two. (*She meditates while the waiter lays the cloth. Exit* WAITER.) Being a Spanish lady of high degree, the only course open to me is suicide. Fortunately, this ring contains a dose of poison strong enough for two, otherwise I should have had to die unavenged or to send round to the chemist's for more. (*She pours out two glasses of wine, splits the contents of her ring between them, and goes to the window.*) Ah! here they come. It is annoying that they are so far off. I cannot distinguish them in the dark; however, they are fighting. Now one is killed and the other is coming in. I wonder which it will be.

Enter DON GIOVANNI.

GIOV: There! my own, my beautiful one. I'm afraid you did not have a very good view, but your poor husband was such a damned bad swordsman that I inadvertently killed him before I could get him as near as I intended.

IN: Well, I confess I should like to view the body, just to make sure you have not killed the wrong gentleman—if you've no objection?

GIOV: None whatever. You'll find him in the gutter, up the street, under the third lamp post. (*Exit* DONNA INEZ. DON GIOVANNI *observes the two glasses of wine and smells them suspiciously. Re-enter* DONNA INEZ.)

IN: Perfectly satisfactory and I thank you.

GIOV: My own, my beautiful one! I love you! Be mine.

IN: Shall we not first have a little supper? You must be fatigued after your exertions. And see! here is a nice glass of wine for you.

GIOV: After you, Madama. (DONNA INEZ *hesitates to drink.*) You see, my beautiful one, I have had some experience in these matters, and now I never drink anything poured out for me by a lady unless she drinks some of it herself.

In (*aside*) : Being a Spanish lady of high degree I cannot possibly refuse. I can only trust that as he is of noble birth and valorous, he won't be such a blackguard as not to drink. (*Drinks.*)

Giov: Brava! But—do you know?—after all, I think I should prefer a fresh bottle, if it's quite the same to you, my beautiful one. (*He empties his glass upon the floor; the wine flows about the stage in a stream of fire.* Donna Inez *dies in agony. Exit* Don Giovanni *laughing. Curtain.*)

During the applause that followed, Brancaccia rose, exclaiming :

" Such a thing could not possibly happen."

She collected her wraps and we left the theatre, although the play was in nine acts and we had only seen three. As soon as we got home, she retired. I said to Peppino :

" I wish we had not gone to that play. I am sure Brancaccia has been frightened by it."

" No," said he, " not frightened."

" But she's gone away to recover herself ? "

" Look here, Brancaccia don't be thinking of the drama. She don't be thinking of nothing—only the baby. She go to see if Ricuzzu is sleeping."

PALERMO

CHAPTER III

MARIONETTISTS AT HOME

ALESSANDRO GRECO TO THE AUTHOR.

MARIONETTE THEATRE,
PIAZZA NUOVA, PALERMO,
4 *June*, 1909.

MY DEAR ENRICO,

Since I last wrote to you there has been a continual to-do and no time for writing letters. What has been the to-do ? Is it possible you have forgotten my telling you that I am studying to be a singer and that I take lessons every day ? Now listen to this : Here in Palermo, a new opera was performed recently for the benefit of the victims of the earthquake at Messina. The story was taken from a great German romance and the music was composed by an Italian who is now in America. I was asked to sing as a supplementary tenor. We had a month of rehearsals and in the end the performance was splendidly successful. O my dear friend ! if you had seen me on the stage ! I was dressed as a warrior with a wig of curly hair and a pair of moustaches. I also received applause, and, when I appeared before the audience to bow my acknowledgments, I thought : " Oh, if only my dear friend were present, how he would be applauding me ! " You will understand after that whether I have had any time to write to you ; but now that things have calmed down a little and there is less going on I can write to you as much as you like.

As you know, I am always busy in the teatrino ; the other evening we repeated *Samson*, that play which you once saw here. If you will believe me, I was thinking of you the whole time because I remembered that when we gave it two years ago you were present.

Just now in the *Story of the Paladins,* Orlando is throwing away his arms and running about naked in the woods, mad for love of Angelica; and soon we shall have the burning of Bizerta and the destruction of the Africans. This will finish in July and we shall then begin the *Story of Guido Santo.*

What have you done with that photograph of myself which I gave you and which you put into your cigarette-case? Is it still there, or have you lost it? I have often promised to send you another but have not done so because when you come to Palermo in September I hope we shall be photographed together, you and I. Nevertheless I send you this one now, it was taken by an English lady who came to the teatrino last summer; you see me getting into a rage with a paladin, I am talking seriously to him and swearing at him because he will not let me dress him properly.

I will not prolong this letter, I do not wish to bore you; but I promise you that I will never fail to let you know of my doings and I count on you to tell me of yours.

Costantino, Sansone, Rinaldo, Rosina, Angelica, Ferraù, Pasquino, Onofrio and all the other marionettes embrace you and send you their kind regards.

I am and always shall be
Your affectionate friend
Alessandro Greco (Buffo).

On arriving at Palermo, I went to the teatrino at about ten at night; not seeing the buffo in his usual place keeping order at the door, I guessed he must be on the stage and, knowing the way, passed through the audience, dived under the proscenium, crept along a short passage, mounted a ladder and appeared among them unannounced. The father, the buffo and his brother, Gildo, were so much astonished that they dropped their marionettes all over the stage and shouted:

"When did you come?" "Why did you not write?" "Why did you not telegraph?"

Thereby spreading their astonishment among the audience, who saw no connection between these ejaculations and the exploits of Guido Santo. They soon re-

covered themselves, however, picked up their paladins and managed to bring the performance to its conclusion, and we shut the theatre and proceeded upstairs to the house. On the way the buffo took me aside into his workshop to show me two inflammable Turkish pavilions which he was making ; Ettorina in her madness was to fire them in a few days, one in the afternoon and the other at the evening repetition, as a conclusion to the spectacle. I inquired :

" Who was Ettorina, and why did she go mad ? "

" I will tell you presently," replied the buffo, " we must first go upstairs."

As we went up I asked after the singing and he promised to take me to the house of his professor to hear him have a lesson. Papa and Gildo had preceded us and we found them with the young ladies, Carolina and Carmela, and the child, Nina, who is as much a buffa as her brother Alessandro is a buffo. In a moment, the air was thick with compliments.

PAPA : And how well you are looking ! So much fatter than last year.

MYSELF (*accepting the compliment*) : That is very kind of you. You are all looking very well also. Let me see, Buffo mio, how old are you now ?

ALESSANDRO : Guess.

MYSELF : Twenty-five.

ALESS : Bravo. I completed my twenty-fifth year just three weeks ago. And you ?

MYSELF : I have also completed my twenty-fifth year, but I did it more than three weeks ago.

ALESS : I see. You have twenty-five years on one shoulder ; and how many more on the other ?

MYSELF ; Twenty-five.

ALESS : It seems to me you are making a habit of attaining twenty-five. Are you going to do it again ?

MYSELF : I have begun, but I shall put off completing it as long as possible. If you want to know my exact age

I will give you the materials for making the calculation. I went to the Great Exhibition of 1851.

GILDO: Tell us about it. I have often seen pictures of it in the illustrated papers, but I have never spoken to anyone who was there. Was it very beautiful? Were there many people? Did you see Queen Victoria?

MYSELF: I can't tell you much about it. I was asleep and when I woke up I was so hungry that I cried till my mother took me into a side room and gave me my dinner. Then I went to sleep again until they took me home. I have been to many exhibitions since, but I never enjoyed one so much. You see, this one did not bore me.

ALESS: You should not have had your dinner there. I went to the exhibition in Palermo and the food in the restaurant was not wholesome.

GILDO: Yes, but you must remember that Alessandro is very particular about his food. He can only eat the most delicate things and must have plenty of variety.

MYSELF: I did not have much variety in those days. I took my restaurant with me, the one at which I was having all my meals.

GILDO: Oh well, if one can afford to travel like a prince——

MYSELF: Gildo! I was not six weeks old and——

PAPA: I have now made the calculation and I find you are my senior by six years. I hope that when I have caught you up I shall carry my age as lightly as you carry yours. Do I explain myself?

ALESS (*to me*): I think you look older. I should have said you were a well-preserved man of sixty-four or (*stretching a point in my favour*) perhaps sixty-five.

MYSELF (*feeling sure that here must be another compliment*): Thank you very much.

BUFFO: Not at all; it does you great credit.

GILDO: Now me, please. Ask me my age.

MYSELF: Well, Gildo, and how old are you?

GILDO: A hundred and seventy-four next birthday.

MYSELF: Santo Diavolo! You don't look it. You must have been very busy since last autumn when, if I remember right, you were only twenty-one.

CAROLINA (*tapping my right arm to attract my attention*): Signor Enrico, Signor Enrico, why do you not ask me my age?

CARMELA (*tapping my left arm*): Signor Enrico, Signor Enrico, you have not asked me my age.

MYSELF: Because I know how old you are. You are both of you the age that charming young ladies always are, and you do not look a day older.

NINA: I'm fourteen.

CARO and CARM (*comparing notes*): Did you hear what he said? He said we are charming young ladies.

NINA (*insisting*): I'm fourteen. Do I look it?

MYSELF: I can compliment you on looking a little older. Since last year you have grown out of being a child, but you have hardly yet grown into being a young lady like your sisters, though you are quite as charming.

ALESS (*taking the opportunity to begin*): First you must know that Carlo Magno is now dead and the Pope is shut up in Paris and is being——

CARO: Signor Enrico, Signor Enrico, do you drink marsala in London?

MYSELF: Marsala is known in London, but we do not drink it every day as you do in Palermo.

GILDO: In England people drink tea; everything is so different in England.

MYSELF: That is quite true, Gildo. In England what is like that (*holding my hand out with the palm up*) in Sicily is like this (*holding it with the palm down. Peppino Pampalone taught me this gesture*).

GILDO: And that is why in London the people walk on their feet, whereas in Palermo they walk on their hands, as you have no doubt observed.

ALESS: Si; e ecco perchè in Londra si mangia colla bocca, ma quì, in Palermo, si mangia nella maniera che ti

farò vedere da un diavolo nel teatrino. But I was telling you about the Pope. He is shut up in Paris, where he is guarding the Christians against the——

CARO: Signor Enrico, do you ever see the sun in London?

GILDO: Yes, they see the sun in London, but only on three days of the week; on the other days they send it to be cleaned.

CARM: Then it is not the same sun as ours?

GILDO: It is a different sun. Our sun is made of gold and remains always bright. The sun of London is made of copper and, being constantly exposed to the air, it tarnishes more rapidly even than the breastplate of Carlo Magno, and you know what a lot of cleaning that wants.

PAPA: All this is very interesting, but listen to me. I have something to say. When I was a boy at school—are you attending? Very well, then, I may proceed. When I was a boy at school, we had a professor who told us that in consequence of——

CARO: Signor Enrico, Signor Enrico, what is the English for Grazie?

MYSELF: It means Thank you.

CARM: Signor Enrico, Signor Enrico, what is the English for Buona notte?

MYSELF: Buona notte in English is Good night.

ALESS: —and Paris is being besieged by four Turkish emperors, namely, Rodoferro di Siberia, Balestrazzo di Turgovia, Leofine di Cina and Bracilone d'Africa, and they have two hundred thousand men——

GILDO: Now me, please. Teach me to speak English. What did you say is the English for Grazie?

MYSELF: Thank you.

GILDO: And Buona notte?

MYSELF: Good night.

GILDO (*tentatively*): Thank you. Good night.

MYSELF: Bravo, very good.

CARO: What does that mean?

MYSELF: Very good means——

PAPA : —and this professor of ours told us that in consequence of certain natural—do I explain myself?—of certain natural causes, it is rare for a human being to live more than one hundred years. It is therefore unlikely that——

ALESS : —and Paris is being besieged by——

MYSELF : Yes, I know, Buffo, by four Turkish emperors and they have two hundred thousand men. I should think it must be rather a serious situation. But I want to hear about Ettorina.

ALESS : It is a very serious situation, but do not be alarmed because——

PAPA : —it is therefore unlikely that Gildo will ever reach the age of one hundred and seventy-four. Do I explain myself ?

CARO : Signor Enrico, Come sta ? what does it mean ?

MYSELF : It means How do you do ?

CARO (*trying her hand*) : How do you do ?

MYSELF : Brava. Very good.

(*Nina did not ask to be taught English. She was following the conversation with sympathetic illustrative gestures not caring two straws whether anyone observed her, just as she did not care whether anyone observed that she was breathing ; and, just as she could not stop breathing, so she appeared unable to stop her gestures. She was as incessant and as resourceful as the orchestra in* Hänsel and Gretel.)

CARM : Signor Enrico, Signor Enrico, Io t'amo.

MYSELF : Oh ! but this is so sudden.

ALESS : —do not be alarmed, because——

CARM : What does it mean in English ?

MYSELF : Oh, I beg your pardon. It means——

ALESS : —do not be alarmed, for it is the will of heaven that——

PAPA : I may even go further and say it is unlikely that Gildo——

CARO: Signor Enrico, do you know what Carmela is doing?

MYSELF : She is making lace on a pillow, no doubt for her wedding trousseau.

CARM (*demurely*) : Not for my wedding. No one will ever want to marry me.

MYSELF : Oh, come now, you don't expect me to believe that ?

ALESS : —it is the will of heaven that they shall all escape——

MYSELF : Well, if this is not for you, perhaps it is for Carolina's wedding ?

ALESS : —that they shall all escape to Montalbano——

CARO (*demurely*) : Not for my wedding. I shall never marry. I shall stay at home and look after my dear papa and my dear brothers.

NINA (*recklessly*) : That's all very pretty, but I'm going to get married. (*She was sitting on the edge of the table swinging her legs.*)

ALESS : —that they shall all escape to Montalbano through the subterranean road which the devils——

MYSELF : Why don't you tell me about Ettorina ? Come to Ettorina.

ALESS : One moment, if you please—which the devils will make on Wednesday evening——

CARM : You have not yet told me what it is in English.

MYSELF : What what is in English ?

CARM : Io t'amo.

(*By the time I had given the information Papa, who had been proposing my health in a speech of which I caught little except an occasional* Do I explain myself ? *had begun perorating towards a close and was about to crown his remarks with a brindisi in verse.*)

PAPA : Questa tavola——

GILDO (*taking the words out of his mouth*) :

—oggi è assai più bella.

Enrico ! Bevo alla salute di tua sorella.[1]

ALESS : —which the devils will make on Wednesday evening by command of Argantino the——

[1] This table—

—is much merrier than usual this evening.

Enrico ! I drink to the health of your sister.

PAPA (*beginning again*) :

Questa tavola non è sporca ma è netta.
Enrico ! mangia, e non dare a loro retta.[1]

MYSELF (*obediently taking a pear. It was a fine pear with a maggot in it ; they wanted me to take another but I knew that those with maggots are usually the best. Not seeing why I should not be a poet also, I put it thus*) :

Animale
Non fa male.[2]

GILDO (*instantly raising his glass*) :

Ora che ho mangiato non sono più a dieta ;
Bevo alla salute d'Enrico che è poeta.[3]

ALESS : Anch'io voglio brindar, da povero precoce,
Ad Enrico che sentir vuole la mia voce ;
Da un anno non ti vedo, O caro fratello !
Vieni oggi, ti farò sentir l'*Otello*.[4]

MYSELF (*bowing my acknowledgments*) : Thank you very much.

GILDO : What did you say ? Does that mean Good night ? Is that what you said before ?

MYSELF : Very much means Molto, Thank you means Grazie, and Good night means Buona notte.

GILDO : Let me try. Very much thank you good night ?

MYSELF : Bravo, Gildo ! You are making progress.

(*Nina was not so much preoccupied with her comments as to be unable to take a line of her own when there was nothing particularly inspiring in the conversation and, just now, she had laid her head down in an empty plate and was unostentatiously putting out her tongue and making faces sideways at me.*)

[1] This table is not dirty, it is clean.
Enrico ! Eat, and do not pay attention to them.

[2] The animal
Will not do it any harm.

[3] Now that I have eaten I am no longer fasting ;
I drink to the health of Enrico, who is a poet.

[4] I also, if I may make so bold, wish to drink the health of Enrico who desires to hear me sing ; for a year I have not seen you, O, my dear brother ! Come to-day and I will sing you *Otello*.

GILDO (*taking a fig in one hand and raising his glass with the other*) :

Oggi mi voglio mangiare un fico ;
Bevo alla salute del Signor Enrico.[1]

(*I had to drink each time, not much—merely to acknowledge the compliment—excusing myself by saying I had not the energy to drink more.*)

MYSELF : My dear Buffo, when you have sufficiently got into the habit of being twenty-five to approach the age Gildo says he is, you will not have so much energy as you have now.

ALESS : Yes, I shall.

MYSELF : No, Buffo mio.

ALESS : We will make a bet about it, but you will lose.

GILDO (*to Aless*) : By that time Enrico will not be here to pay it he does lose, so you will not win.

MYSELF : Bravo, Gildo.

GILDO (*bowing his acknowledgments*) : Thank you very night—Why do you laugh ? That is what you say. Why do you laugh ?

PAPA (*taking his revenge about the brindisi*) : Don't talk so much, Gildo.

ALESS (*taking his about the bet*) : You have been talking all the evening, Gildo. You are as bad as a conjurer in the piazza.

(*Gildo proclaimed a general silence and, as a guarantee of good faith, pretended to skewer his lips together with a tooth-pick.*)

ALESS (*whispering to me*) : Argantino is the Prince of the Devils and has commanded them to make the subterranean road from Paris to Montalbano——

PAPA : May I speak one word ?

MYSELF (*graciously*) : Yes, Papa. You may even speak two words.

PAPA : I——

[1] To-day I feel inclined to eat a fig ;
I drink to the health of Signor Enrico.

ALESS and GILDO (*shouting*): One!

PAPA: —have——

ALESS and GILDO: Two! There now, shut up. You've spoken your two words. Silence.

CARO: Signor Enrico, last year you only stayed in Palermo four days; this year you will, of course, stay at least a month.

MYSELF: I am sorry, my dear young lady, but it is impossible.

ALESS: —and they will all escape and——

MYSELF: Please, Buffo, how many kilometres is it from Paris to Montalbano?

ALESS: I do not remember, but it is a long way.

CARO: Why do you not stay a month?

CARM: Yes, why are you going away?

MYSELF: My dear young ladies, I must go to Calatafimi.

CARO: But why do you go to Calatafimi?

CARM: Yes, why do you not stay with us?

(*Nina did not speak. She merely gazed at me as though she could not mind her wheel, Mother.*)

MYSELF: I have friends at Calatafimi whom I have promised to go and see and I cannot——

ALESS: —and arrive in safety at Montalbano.

MYSELF: I believe you told me once that Montalbano is Rinaldo's castle in Gascony. Did the devils make a subterranean road right across France? It is a long way, you know.

ALESS: The devils must do as Argantino commands them.

MYSELF: If he is the Prince of the Devils of course they must; but this seems rather a large order. Come to Ettorina. Why don't you come to Ettorina?

ALESS: One moment, if you please; first you must know that——

CARO: Signor Enrico, who are your friends at Calatafimi?

MYSELF: I know a baritone singer and his father and

mother, two or three landed proprietors and the custode of the Temple of Segesta who lives at Calatafimi and is a great friend of mine. I also know another——

CARM: It is not true. How many ladies do you know at Calatafimi?

MYSELF: Well, let me see. I don't think I can exactly——

CARO: Tell us about the young ladies of Calatafimi, you like them better than you like us.

(*Here sobs were heard; Nina's head and shoulders had fallen over the back of her chair, her hair had come down and she was weeping gently but inconsolably.*)

MYSELF: I shall be back in three days.

(*Whereupon Nina recovered herself and fixed her eyes on the ceiling with an expression of beatific joy such as is worn by S. Caterina da Siena when the ring is being put on her finger in the pictures. Nina's hair had now to be done up and it is magnificent hair, lustrous, black, wavy, thick and long—for a girl of fourteen, wonderful. Her two sisters did it up as though it usually came down about this time of the evening and she submitted in the same spirit. It was no concern of ours.*)

PAPA: It is now one year since you were last in Palermo and it seems like yesterday—do I explain myself?

GILDO (*so that everyone could hear*): I have kept all your post-cards in a secret place. No one suspects that I have received them.

ALESS: You must know that before Malagigi died he——

CARO: Signor Enrico, why do you wear spectacles?

MYSELF: In order that I may more clearly contemplate your beauty.

CARO: I do not believe you.

CARM: Signor Enrico, why do you wear your hair so short?

MYSELF: In order that——

CARO: Signor Enrico, why do you wear that little beard, that barbetta?

CARM : Signor Enrico, why do you wear—— ?

ALESS : Why do you wear a coat and waistcoat ?

GILDO : Why do you wear boots ?

PAPA : Why do you—— ?

NINA : I can tell you why he does all these things. It is to make the young ladies of Calatafimi go mad for love of him as the daughter of Cladinoro went mad for love of Ruggiero Persiano.

MYSELF : I have never heard of Ruggiero Persiano. Who was he, a paladin ?

NINA : Yes ; a cavaliere errante.

MYSELF : Then who was the daughter of Cladinoro ?

NINA : Ettorina.

MYSELF : Do you mean to say that Ettorina went mad for love of Ruggiero Persiano ?

NINA : Yes.

MYSELF (*rising to go*) : Finalmente !

ALESS : Yes, but first you must know——

MYSELF : All right, Buffo, never mind about that ; at last I know who Ettorina was and why she went mad and that will do for the present. Thank you very much and good night.

GILDO : That is what I said. Why did you laugh when I said that ?

MYSELF : Say it again, Gildo, and I won't laugh this time.

GILDO : Thank you very night and good much.

MYSELF : Bravo. If you go on at this rate you will soon be speaking English like a native.

I took leave of the young ladies, and Papa, Alessandro and Gildo accompanied me to the albergo, where they left me. As I approached my bedroom door I looked up over it half-expecting to see there the words which, years ago, I had seen written over the entrance to a Tuscan monastery :

O beata Solitudo !
O sola Beatitudo !

CHAPTER IV

MALAGIGI

NEXT morning I called on the buffo in his workshop. His two combustible Turkish pavilions were finished, ready to be fired by Ettorina, and he was full of his devils. I inquired why we were doing Guido Santo so soon ; it was only a year since my last visit to Palermo, when I had witnessed his lamented end after a fortnight of starvation in prison, and, at this rate, the story would be over in fourteen months instead of lasting eighteen. The buffo said they had made the experiment of shortening it. If one has to shorten a story, probably the *Paladins of France* with its continuations would suffer less from the process than many others. At all events it could scarcely grow longer, as a work of art so often does when one tries to shorten it.

The devils were naturally among the dramatis personæ of the teatrino, but they had to be got ready and repaired and provided with all things necessary for them to make the subterranean road. I said :

" I am not sure that I quite followed all you told me last night."

" There was perhaps a little confusion ? " he inquired apologetically.

" Not at all," I replied politely ; " but I never heard of Argantino before. Did you say he was the son of Malagigi ? "

" That is right. He did not happen to be at Roncisvalle, so he was not killed with Orlando and the other paladins. An angel came to him and said, ' Now the Turks will make much war against the Christians and, since the Christians always want a magician, it is the will of heaven that you shall have the rod of Malagigi, who is no longer here, and that Guido Santo shall have la Durlindana, the sword of

Orlando.' And it was so, and Argantino thereafter appeared as a pilgrim."

"I remember about Malagigi; he made all Rinaldo's armour."

"Excuse me, he made some of his armour; but he did not make his helmet, nor his sword Fusberta, nor his horse Baiardo. First you must know that Rinaldo was one of the four brothers, sons of Amone, and their sister was Bradamante."

"I saw her die at Trapani. The Empress Marfisa came and found her dying of grief in a grotto for the loss of her husband, Ruggiero da Risa."

"Precisely. She was Marfisa's sister-in-law because she married Marfisa's brother Ruggiero da Risa."

"Then who was the cavaliere errante, Ruggiero Persiano?"

"He was the son of Marfisa and Guidon Selvaggio, and this Guidon Selvaggio was the son of Rinaldo."

"Had Bradamante no children?"

"Guido Santo is the son of Bradamante and Ruggiero da Risa."

"I heard something about Guido Santo at Castellinaria the other day—let me see, what was it? Never mind. I hope he left children."

"I told you last year that he never married."

"Oh yes, of course; that is what I was thinking of. One cannot remember everything at once and pedigrees are always confusing at first. Then it is for love of Bradamante's nephew by marriage, Ruggiero Persiano, that Ettorina has now gone mad?"

"Bravo. And Malagigi was Bradamante's cousin."

"How was that?"

"Amone had a brother Buovo, and Malagigi was the son of Buovo. Therefore Malagigi was the cousin of Rinaldo and of Bradamante. And that is all you need know about the pedigree for the present. Malagigi was Emperor of Magic. Other magicians only commanded a devil or two

each, but Malagigi dominated all the hosts of the inferno, all the devils, harpies, serpents, gorgons, hydras, furies and also the monster Briareus."

" Just as the buffo dominates all the marionettes in the teatrino," I interpolated.

He bowed and proceeded : " Rinaldo's helmet used to belong to Mambrino."

" I have read about it in *Don Quixote*."

" Ah ! but that was not a real helmet ; that was only a barber's basin because Cervantes wanted to laugh at Don Quixote. Rinaldo slew Mambrino and took his helmet, but Mambrino was a giant and his helmet was too large for Rinaldo, so Malagigi took it down into the laboratory of the inferno and altered it to fit."

" And do the audience see all that done on the stage ? "

" Most of it ; and what they do not see they imagine. Fusberta, Rinaldo's sword, formerly belonged to another giant, Atlante. Malagigi always intended it for Rinaldo, but he was a wise magician and knew that people do not value things unless they pay for them, so he would not let him have it till he had earned it by killing Atlante."

" It's rather like what you told me last year about Orlando's dream and his going to the river-bank where Carlo Magno and that other giant, Almonte, were fighting, and his killing Almonte and his taking his sword and horse and armour."

" I did not say that Orlando had a dream ; it was Carlo Magno who had the dream about a young man whom he did not know, and I told you that afterwards, when Orlando came and helped him to fight Almonte, Carlo Magno recognised him as the young man in his dream."

" Sorry, Buffo ; my mistake. But it is rather like it, isn't it ? "

" About his taking the giant's sword it is rather like it, but that is not a bad thing in the teatrino, the people must not be puzzled by too much variety."

Then he told me about Baiardo, Rinaldo's horse, who

formerly belonged to Amadigi di Gaula, to whom he was given by Berliante, another magician, who found him in the desert. After the death of Amadigi, Berliante chose out seven devils, put them inside Baiardo and turned him loose in the forest, saying : " This horse can only be dominated by a man as strong as Amadigi." After this, several things happened, of which I only remember that Baiardo kicked all the sense out of Isolier, a Spanish cavalier who was trying to tame him with his sword, not knowing the right way to do it, and a nameless Englishman was involved in a duel. At last Rinaldo came and, after working hard at Baiardo for an hour, struck him a blow between the eyes with his mailed fist and thus tamed him. Then Rinaldo mounted him and boasted of his triumph, shouting in his humorous way : " Now Baiardo is carrying eight devils."

" And so you see Rinaldo getting Baiardo is not at all like Orlando getting his horse Vegliantino ; besides, Baiardo is red, the colour of fire, and Vegliantino is white all over, without one black hair."

" Why do you call Orlando's horse Vegliantino ? Last year he was Brigliadoro."

" One moment, if you please. Almonte called him Brigliadoro because he had a golden bridle ; but when Orlando took him he called him Vegliantino because he was so wide-awake—only slept with one eye at a time—always kept the other open. You have good horses also in England. I read in the *Giornale di Sicilia* that your King Edward has a good horse who won the great race this year, but I do not remember his name. It was not a reasonable name."

" The name was Minoru. Do you think that a bad name for a good horse ? "

" I think Vegliantino is better."

" Perhaps it is. Let us return to Malagigi. Are you not going to tell me why he is no longer giving the Christians the benefit of his services as magician ? "

So he told me about Malagigi, who, it seems, had a quarrel with Carlo Magno, in the course of which Malagigi boasted:

"You are the Emperor of the World, but I am the Emperor of the Inferno."

Carlo Magno did not quite like this and responded by cursing Malagigi, saying that he would not go to heaven when he died. One would think that Malagigi must have had the substance of this remark addressed to him before by persons who had not troubled to wrap it up in the imperial language employed by Carlo Magno. If so, it had never made any impression on him, but now he began to think there might be something in it. He had been a good man on the whole and a Christian, nevertheless, as a sorcerer he had no doubt diabolised a little too freely. To be on the safe side, he determined to repent and, as these things do not get over the footlights unless they are done in the grand manner, he began by burning his magical books, all except one, and they were the books of Merlin, whose disciple he had been. He next dropped his name of Malagigi, because it had been given him by the devils in council, and called himself Onofrio. He still kept on terms with his confidential private devil, Nacalone, whom he now summoned and to whom he spoke these words:

"Convey me to some peaceful shore where I may repent of my sins and die of grief in a grotto."

When we came to this—I could not help it, I was full of small complaints that morning—I exclaimed:

"But, my dear Buffo, this makes consecutive fifths with his cousin Bradamante dying of grief in the grotto at Trapani."

He admitted that it would have been better if one of them had had the originality to die in bed as a Christian or an ordinary man does, or to be killed in mortal combat, but there it was, it was the will of heaven and could not be altered. It seemed rather an invitation to the shortener of

the story, but the same people do not come to the theatre every night and those who had missed the death of Bradamante would be pleased to see Malagigi die.

The nearest peaceful shore with a suitable grotto known to Nacalone happened to be in Asia ; he put his master on his back and flew off with him apologising for carrying him so far, but there was not really much trouble about it, because his wings were strong and the journey was accomplished in safety.

Malagigi sat repenting in his Asian grotto, like S. Gerolamo in the pictures. He found a stone with a hole in it into which he stuck a cross made of two pieces of wood tied together with dried grass, and to this cross he prayed. In the intervals of prayer and repentance he gathered the herb malva, dried it, powdered it, mixed it with water into paste, formed it into cakes, baked them in the sun and ate them. When his time came, he died, and gradually his corpse became a skeleton, but his spirit still dwelt within because it was so ordained. His dying did not surprise me —to be born is to enter upon the path which even magicians must tread and which leads to the inevitable door—nor was I alarmed about his spirit remaining inside his skeleton —it gave him a touch of originality after all and differentiated his death from that of Bradamante whose soul I had seen extracted by an angel ; but I could not help being seriously uneasy about his burning all his books. Each book had a devil chained inside it, and when Malagigi opened a book its devil used to appear for instructions. As long as he was repenting, they might perhaps be trusted to behave themselves ; but after his death, in spite of its being somewhat equivocal, I was afraid that all these devils, and Merlin had an extensive library, would escape and be free to do as they chose. The buffo assured me, however, that no harm would come of it, and as he knew what was ordained by the will of heaven I was ready to take his word ; besides, there was still the one unburnt book and this was the home of Nacalone, who might be powerful

enough to avert disasters. So Malagigi's body remained in the grotto, dead and yet not dead.

Then a time came when his son Argantino happened to be travelling in Asia with his second cousin Guido Santo. Accompanied by Costanzo, a Turk, whom Argantino had defeated and baptised, the two knights came to the dreadful enchanted grotto and entered it to see whether perhaps it might contain anything good to eat. Costanzo did not enter, they sent him off to collect a quantity of wood to make a fire because it was a chilly evening. When their eyes had become accustomed to the dim light, they discerned a tomb whereon was this inscription:

IN HOC LOCO PAX.

Guido knelt down to pray, saying: "I perceive here a sepulchre."

"Yes," replied Argantino kneeling by his side; "I wonder who in this peaceful grotto is sleeping his last long sleep."

Presently the tomb opened by a miracle and a voice disturbed their devotions:

"Malagigi parlerà."

The two cousins trembled with horror as a skeleton rattled up from the sepulchre and spoke thus:

"I am the great magician Malagigi, and in obedience to the command of heaven my spirit has here waited for this day. To you, O my son Argantino! I confide the one book of magic which remains to me. To you, O Guido! I confide the horse Sfrenato."

Here he delivered the two compliments to the two paladins; but for the moment Sfrenato took the magical book and carried it in his mouth as a cat carries her kitten.

"And now, listen to me. Terrible times are in store for the Christians and it is God's ordinance that you two shall preserve the faith. Swear to me therefore, O Guido! that you will"—and so forth.

When he had concluded his address, his prophetic spirit was exhausted, as might perhaps have been anticipated, for the speech was of portentous length, and the skeleton clattered down again into the tomb, which closed by another miracle while a ball of fire ran along upon the ground across the stage and back again. Then Guido took his oath and spoke thus to Argantino :

" Let us now depart. And you Turks ! all of you, tremble ! for Guido shall be your destruction."

With this he vaulted upon Sfrenato, who curveted and whinnied with joy at recognising his master. And so the two paladins continued their journey ; but before leaving the neighbourhood they naturally made arrangements with the local marble-mason to have the tomb closed in a proper and hygienic manner.

" And all this," said the buffo, " happened only last Friday, and why did you not come in time to see it ? It was very emotional."

CHAPTER V

ARGANTINO

As I had missed the emotional interview at the tomb the buffo generously arranged that there should be a private repetition of the scene specially for the young ladies and me ; but it could not be that afternoon because it would take time to prepare and we had the appointment to go to his professor's house for his singing lesson, and that also would take time. Before singing one does a few exercises, the effect of which is to warm up the throat and awaken the voice, because the warmer the throat, the better the quality of the voice, and this had to be got through before anyone could be allowed to listen. At the proper moment I was taken to the professor's house and introduced into the studio where the buffo, who had taken off his collar to

do the exercises, sang extracts from his repertorio, which includes *Otello*, *Rigoletto*, *I Pagliacci* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

After he had sung one of his pieces, I made him my compliments and congratulated his professor on the result of his teaching, whereupon they made their excuses—I had come on an unfortunate day, the voice was suffering from fatigue and the piano was out of tune. I had not observed the fatigue, but they were right about the piano and I agreed with the maestro, who said it was time to order a new one. Not only was it out of tune enough to curdle the milk, but they had endeavoured to distract attention from its defects by crowding its lid with rubbish till it resembled the parlour chimney-piece in a suburban villa or the altar in a second-rate church.

As some old harridan when bidden to the christening of her great-niece fumbles among such ornaments of her gioventù tempestosa as have been refused by the pawnbroker, and choosing the least suitable decks herself out therein, thinking thus to honour the festa—even so on this piano were accumulated artificial flowers, photographs in metal frames, a sprinkling of glass vases in wire cages that jangled, a couple of crockery pigs to bring good luck and a few statuettes and busts.

"Please, Buffo," I inquired, "who is that silver saint upon the piano?"

"It is not a saint," he replied, "it is only un musicista qualunque."

"It looks about the shape of Mozart," I said, wondering what he was doing in that galley.

"I do not remember his name," said the buffo, "it is written on him in front; it is not a reasonable name."

He brought me the bust and I, thinking that, to harmonise with the musical atmosphere of the studio, it should have been Leoncavallo or Mascagni, found that it was even more out of tune than the shameless piano it had been standing on. It was BETKOVEN, with every letter

distinctly legible through the thick silver paint with which it was covered.

These foreign names are so puzzling. At an afternoon party in Palermo I once had a conversation with a gentleman who told me that Bellini was the king of opera-writers and the emperor of composers. To pass a few hours with people who consider Bellini to have written the last note in music is as restful and refreshing as to dream away an August afternoon in a peaceful backwater, forgetting that there is a river running to the sea. After Bellini, the gentleman mentioned Beethoven, who, it seems, studied in Italy, and that is why his music is so melodious. The more accessible writers on Beethoven know as little about this studying in Italy as they know about the Palermitan spelling of his name, but it must be right, because how otherwise could he have acquired his astonishing power of producing the true Italian melody ? And there is another German musician who is even more melodious and more Italian in style than Beethoven and therefore a greater musician.

" Did he also study in Italy ? " I asked. " And what was his name ? "

" They all come here to study, and his name was Sciupè."

I divined that this German melodist could only be either the Viennese Schubert or the French Pole Chopin, but with my English pronunciation I failed to make the distinction. Then a young lady, who had been sitting near, proposed to clear the matter up by playing a piece composed by Sciupè, and if I would listen attentively I should understand why he is known as the German Bellini. By this time I had made up my mind that it must be Schubert and was expecting one of the songs transcribed by Liszt, but she played Chopin's *Funeral March* and told me that the composer had written besides a number of operas and conducted them at Berlin. I acquiesced in what appeared to be the will of heaven, saying :

" Oh ! yes, of course. How stupid of me ! "

The buffo has a fine voice and has got far beyond appearing to have learnt his songs diligently and to be delivering them correctly. I suspect, however, that he did not pass that way. He will soon have assimilated all that can be taught about singing, and for the rest he is naturally an actor, one of those few who are born with the strange power of appearing to experience inwardly what they express outwardly, a power that his life among the marionettes has strengthened and perfected. But as to predicting his future, which is what he wanted me to do, I suppose that only an expert, and perhaps not even an expert, can tell from hearing a singer in a small room how he will sound on the stage ; and the voice is not everything, there is the appearance and the question of how his personality will affect the public, and the further question of how he will stand the life and amalgamate with his fellows. So, like a good Sicilian, I told him that there never was such a magnificent voice, that I had never heard anyone sing so well and that I was sure he would eclipse all previous tenors, which made everything quite satisfactory.

The next day we had our private performance, and it began with Guido Santo and Argantino at the dreadful enchanted grotto of the great magician Malagigi. I was glad to see Argantino ; it was nearly as good as seeing Malagigi in his habit as he lived because, although the son only had one diabolical book, yet in his personal appearance he strikingly resembled the father, being indeed the same marionette and distinguished chiefly by his wings, which he inherited from his mother Sabina who was a witch. Argantino always wore his wings even when he used to wear armour, and on his shield he bore the portrait of a devil so that everyone should know at a glance the kind of man he was. After the angel tells him he is to do the magic for the Christians he appears clothed as a pilgrim with wings, and in this way, although it is the same marionette and both Malagigi and Argantino are magicians, con-

fusion is avoided—at least the buffo said that was the intention.

There was another thing I should have been sorry to miss. I had hitherto supposed the dictionaries to be right in defining a miracle as an event contrary to the established course of nature, but the buffo took me behind the scenes to study the miracle by which the tomb opened. There were three or four strings so arranged that if anyone pulled them the tomb could not remain closed. The buffo pulled them and the tomb opened. Nothing less contrary to the ordinary course of nature could be imagined. It would be interesting to know whether other miracles would similarly falsify their definition if one could have a buffo to take one behind and disclose the secret of how they are performed.

The second scene was a Ballo Fantastico, which was given to take the taste of the tomb and the skeleton out of our mouths. It was done by a heavy Turk who danced cumbrously ; presently his arms detached themselves and became transformed into devils who danced separately ; then his legs followed their example ; then his head descended from his trunk and, on reaching the stage, became transformed into a dancing wizard carrying a rod of magic and beating time to the music ; then, while the body was dancing by itself, various devils came out of it followed by several serpents that floated among the devils ; after which it developed a head, a neck, wings and a tail, so that it became transformed into a complete dragon, and the wizard mounted upon its back and rode about wizarding all the other creatures. Altogether the original Turk became transformed into sixteen different marionettes.

After this we had a funambolo or rope-dancer. The curtain rose disclosing his rope ready for him, he entered and, after bowing profusely, leapt up and sat first on the rope, then on a seat at the back. Here he played with his pole, holding it first with one hand then with the other, then balancing it on his head and doing tricks with it. Then he walked along the rope forwards and backwards

and danced, doing his steps with great care and precision. After which he sat down to recover his breath. Then he rope-walked again, doing impossible things—that is, they would have been impossible if he had not been sustained by many invisible strings, which the buffo manipulated with wonderful skill. I liked the funambolo even better than the wizard, he was extraordinarily life-like.

In the evening I became transformed into an ordinary member of the public and saw the devils make the subterranean road. The performance contained a great deal besides about Periglio, a Turkish paladin, who, having been accused by the son of the Emperor of China of helping the Christians, was condemned to be beheaded. The father of his accuser with the other three Emperors came to see him die ; they stood at corners relentlessly smoothing their beards and curling their moustaches with their right fists and crying " A Morire ! " Periglio in chains was led on, blindfolded. The solemn headsman followed, carrying his axe, and, as the boy left off turning the handle of the mechanical piano, the cornet blasted a broken-hearted minor ninth over the last chord of the funeral march and prolonged it till—well, after all it was a mistake ; Periglio had not really helped the Christians ; his brother proved that, on the contrary, he had done them as much damage as any Turk among the allied armies of 200,000 men. So he was pardoned, and one of his friends gaily kicked the executioner off the stage. The brothers embraced and then, with their hands on their breasts, bowed to the audience to acknowledge the applause ; but they did not know they were brothers, they had not yet recognised each other ; that was to be another emotional moment to come later on.

The kicking the executioner off the stage and the embracing and bowing of the brothers were so absurdly natural that I inquired about them, and it seemed that Gildo had thought of these effects and carried them out.

"But then," said the buffo, "Gildo is an artist. You should see him with Truffaldino."

"What is Truffaldino? Another cavaliere errante?"

"He is the paladin who is a buffo. You should see him toss his crown from one side of his head to the other and put both his hands on his heart when he makes love to Angelica. He only plays the fool a little the first night, and more and more as the drama proceeds, until he dies by being pulled to pieces by four horses. It is all done by Gildo, and the audience laugh every night that Truffaldino appears."

Then we were taken to Vienna, where Guido Santo and Argantino had arrived, but we only saw Argantino.

"Where is Guido?" I asked. "I want to see him."

"Yes, well, you won't see him this evening," replied the buffo. "He's only in the next room, but he's much too busy to come."

"What is he doing?"

"Baptising Christians—those who couldn't make up their minds before whether they would be converted or not."

"Very well, we won't interrupt him."

So I had to be content with Argantino, who came with his book, his rod of magic and his wings. After flying about for some time in a hall with columns, he settled down, and someone entered and told him the disquieting news about Pope Gregorio III being shut up in Paris. But, knowing that it was the will of heaven that the inhabitants should not perish, he summoned his confidential family devil Nacalone by opening the book, just as a rich man of to-day liberates infernal power by opening his cheque-book. Nacalone was as comic as the mask Pasquino, and tumbled to show his willingness to obey. He had a string to his back so that he could be turned upside down and made to stand on his head. He received his instructions and flew off to execute them.

The Viennese columns disappeared and the devils, plenty of them, all with wings and tails and horns, were shown, as

in a vision, working at the subterranean road. Two were sawing a block of stone ; some flew up to use their hammers and do work in the upper parts of the tunnel ; one, who was perhaps nervous or perhaps more of an artist and wanted to look the part of a modern Palermitan workman, used his legs to climb a ladder to reach his work ; others were digging up the ground and knocking down the walls ; a devil wheeled an empty Sicilian cart, painted with paladins, rapidly across the stage and after a moment wheeled it back slowly because it was now heavily laden with tools and cement ; another kept coming with a basket of stones on his shoulder and emptying them down in heaps. It was a busy scene and much applauded, especially the cart. The Viennese columns hid it from view.

The buffo was very proud of this scene, and no wonder.

" There is nothing like it in Dante. But then," he continued, " there would not be likely to be. What is Dante ? As versification, as language, his poem is fine, splendid, supreme, above all other poetry books ; but as sense, what is it ? And then again, why should Dante go about to make me believe in devils ? Me ! the ruler of all the devils in the teatrino ! As though I did not know more about devils than anyone. Dante is the Emperor of Words, but the buffo is the Emperor of Deeds. And then his obscurity ! As a theme for discussion Dante is as obscure as religion. One says : ' It is so.' While another says : ' It is not so.' As men discuss a melon and one says : ' Inside it is red.' While another says : ' Inside it is white.' Who can bear testimony to the truth of Dante's words ? We cannot cut his poem open and see his inner meaning. Whereas I have cut my inferno open for you. I have shown you what it is like inside, and you can bear testimony to the truth of the subterranean road."

The buffo told me that the Christians in Paris were not armed, but they all got safely away to Montalbano. During the siege, the Pope directed the defence, and the people, following his commands, threw their furniture over the

walls with the intention of damaging the enemy ; but the Turkish Emperors had made a study of the art of war and taught their men how to hold their shields over their heads, and thus they warded off the chairs and tables and were able to creep along under cover, approach the city, climb up the walls and descend into the piazza. The first who entered went round to open the gates and let the rest in. As soon as they had recovered from their surprise at finding that the inhabitants had all escaped, they began to commit sacrileges. Balestrazzo, Emperor of Turgovia, occupied the principal church of Paris as a stable for his horses. Rainello, a nephew of the traitor Gano di Magonza, wishing to do a bravery, went into a church and cried with a loud voice :

" Take down that crucifix ; it is only wood ; if it had been a god I should not have denied the faith. Take it away. There is only one God and Mahomet is his prophet."

With this he leapt on the altar, drew his sword, and was about to hew the crucifix into pieces when a thunderbolt struck him. As he was the first to lay hands upon the sacred images, so he was the first to be struck. But he recovered ; he did not die of the thunderbolt ; it was the will of heaven that he should live to be killed by Guido Santo.

It was a pity that I had to go to Calatafimi and could not stay for all this, but before I went I had the satisfaction of seeing Ettorina go mad. At first she was hardly more than slightly unhinged, yet she was mad enough to enter the enemy's camp by night. The sentinel had just been awakened by the corporal, but she paid no more attention to them than they to her. Nor did she shrink from making consecutive fifths, or downright octaves, with Costanzo as she crossed the stage, going away to fetch a quantity of wood to light a fire because it was a chilly evening ; but, as the buffo pointed out, she had a sufficient dramatic reason to justify the licence. Presently, like the laden Sicilian cart, she staggered back with her faggots and disappeared. In a few moments we saw the fitful glare from

the conflagration she had kindled dancing on the combustible pavilion which took up all the back of the scene. Various Turkish soldiers entered to investigate the cause of the unwonted light, but they did not return to report, she killed them all, one after the other ; and this gave time which the buffo utilised by applying a match from below, and, while the pavilion blazed and the audience applauded, Ettorina in her burnished armour went as mad as Tilburina in her white satin till the curtain fell.

CHAPTER VI

THE ESCAPE FROM PARIS

ALTHOUGH I had to miss a great deal that it would have been interesting to see on the stage, I spent a couple of mornings with the buffo in his workshop helping to make the scene of the people escaping, which was perhaps even better than being among the audience later. I think he is most happy when he is holding up the mirror to nature and reproducing modern Palermitan life as it appears to him. He enjoyed the devils and the subterranean road, but the inhabitants of Paris in modern costume, each saving his most precious object and escaping with the Pope through the subterranean road to Montalbano, was a larger canvas and gave him more opportunities. As a creative artist he is in the fortunate position of being up to a certain point his own impresario, stage-manager and performer. Nevertheless he has to rely on the co-operation of his father and Gildo, and there is always the public to be considered, therefore it is possible that some of the things we made and contemplated in the workshop did not get so far as to be presented on the stage.

There was a sluggard carrying a mattress under each arm ; and a drunkard carrying a bottle of wine, a real glass bottle that would catch the light and make an effect. Another man had on his back a table and was carrying a

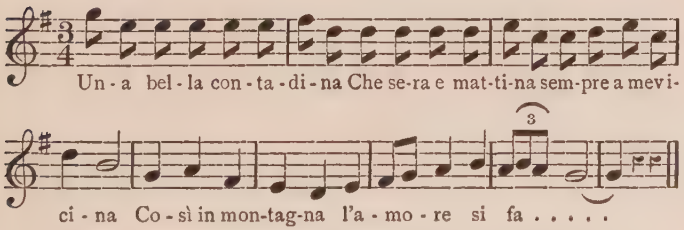
plate, a knife, fork, spoon and napkin ; he was a glutton. The masks Pasquino and Onofrio were making a comic escape and talking in dialect ; Pasquino was carrying his wife Rosina on his shoulder and a pillow in his hand, and Onofrio was saving an article of crockery made at Caltagirone. And because the buffo was studying to become a singer he had made a musician :

" But I cannot show his voice," he complained.

" He might be practising a solfeggio," I suggested, " which you could sing for him." But this was not treating the buffo's voice with proper respect. " Or put a piece of music-paper in his hand and make him a composer."

" Bravo ! But what is written on the music-paper ? "

I said : " *Stornelli Montagnoli.*"

He began to hum meditatively :

" No," he said, " that won't do. In the first place it is not yet known in Palermo, and when it is, it will be so popular that no one in particular will think of saving it."

" Very well then," I replied, " make it that he has just discovered an entirely new resolution of the dominant seventh and has written it down before he forgets it."

" All right. And this is the painter ; he has his easel and a picture which he has only just begun ; that is more precious to him than all the pictures he has finished because it is so full of hope."

" Bravo, Buffo. And where is the miser ? "

" Oh Caspita ! " he exclaimed. " How clever you are ! Of course there must be a miser. We will make him at once."

So we selected an old man marionette who happened to

have nothing particular to do at the moment, and got a piece of sacking out of which we made a bag and filled it—not with gold——

"No," said the buffo, "that must be one of the things the people do not see, they must imagine the gold."

Then we loaded the miser with his bag and added him to the crowd of fugitives.

And he had made a woman saving a mouse-trap; she was a suffragette. That was because he had read in the *Giornale di Sicilia* that in England a meeting of suffragettes had been dispersed by letting mice in among them. The buffo's suffragette had argued thus:

"In all the world there are mice; Montalbano will be no exception. How do I know what sort of house I shall have there? It will probably be over-run with mice. If I take this trap with me, at least I shall be able to catch some of them."

It turned out that she had to sleep on the floor in someone else's house like a fugitive from Messina, and the mouse-trap came in very handy.

And he had made a chemist who was saving a medicine chest and a few instruments. The chemist had argued thus:

"In Montalbano there will be no order. Here in Paris the restaurants are well-managed and the food is good. How can I tell what sort of food they will give us there? Very likely we shall have to depend a great deal upon chance. I will take these instruments and medicine and earn money by curing those who will be sure to be upset by the badness of the food."

And a man came weeping; his father had died the day before and there had not been time to bury the body, but it had been put into a coffin and the undertaker's men were laughing because the son was rich and had promised to pay them extra for carrying the body to Montalbano and burying it there; but the son did not see they were laughing, he was in front to show them the way.

Two boys came along, each saving a marionette, one had

Orlando, the other Rinaldo ; they forgot that they were escaping and stopped to make the paladins fight ; a third boy came and said they were his marionettes and the others had stolen them, and the boys left Orlando and Rinaldo lying on the stage and began to fight among themselves till their three mothers followed.

" Be quick, be quick, you silly boys, be quick," shouted the mothers, hustling everything before them—boys, marionettes and all—as an autumn hurricane sweeps away the fallen leaves.

" What is that man doing ? " I inquired.

" Which man ? "

" The one standing in the corner there—he seems to have a camera."

" Yes, that's right. He has been sent by the Cinematograph Company to reproduce the scene for their show."

" Oh ! I see. That's a capital idea ; the people will like that."

" Yes, won't they ? "

And two men were dragging a heavy bundle along on the ground between them, and I asked :

" What's in the bundle ? "

" Clothes," he replied.

And there was a woman carrying a hen in a basket, and the hen escaped from the basket, laid an egg in the middle of the stage and cackled back into Paris ; but the woman saved the egg and said : " Better an egg to-day than a hen to-morrow."

Another woman was carrying her baby on one arm and leading a child by the hand, and the child was crying because it had to walk too fast and was tired

" This is the astronomer," said the buffo.

" Is that his umbrella under his arm ? It seems too long and too bright."

" No ; that is Halley's comet which he has predicted for next spring. He does not want to leave it behind, the Turks might destroy it and he would lose his reputation."

There was the boy from the barber's shop opposite ; he had been playing with a black kitten when the alarm came and he joined the fugitives just as he was, in his white tunic with the kitten in his arms and a comb stuck in his bushy hair. And there came a troop of old women, chattering and shuffling along and understanding no more about it all than I should have understood if I had not had my buffo, my programme raisonné, to explain it.

Then I said ; " Buffo mio, we have had a musician and a painter, where is the poet ? "

" Here he comes." And there came a pale, Alfred de Musset youth with long hair, a roll of paper and a quill pen. " Do you know what he is saying ? He is saying : ' Better to embrace and be betrayed than to suffer and die in ignorance.' "

" Is that the philosophy of the buffo ? " I inquired.

" It is the philosophy of the poet," he replied.

" Isn't it rather beyond the public ? Will they understand ? "

" The public won't hear that ; it is only for you and me. There are many things we do not tell the public because they are the public ; but we understand because we are artists."

" Very well. And then if we have a poet we must have a critic—won't this one do ? he has a book ; perhaps he is going to review it, or perhaps it is his encyclopædia to save him from making mistakes."

" If you like, he shall be the critic ; only then you ought to tell me what he is saying."

" He is saying : ' I despise everything because it is not something else.' "

" Bravo, bravo ! That is better than what the poet said."

" O my dear Buffo, I am not going to admit that. Besides, it is not true of all critics."

" What I said is not true of all poets."

" Well, if we don't like what we have made them say, let us have someone to follow and show them where they are both wrong."

" All right. Let me see. That will be when they have had time to think it over. That will be the Cold Dawn of the following morning. We will now make the Aurora."

So we found a disengaged lady marionette and began to dress her in a piece of cobwebby grey muslin from which the last few spangles had not yet dropped. I said :

" I'm not at all sure that this is not going too far. Do you think we can really show the Cold Dawn of the following morning escaping out of Paris by the underground road ? "

" She must go ; she will be wanted at Montalbano to show some of the people that they have saved the wrong things."

" Very true. Yes. That is what people so often do when they travel, they leave behind them the things they want most and take a lot of other things that are useless. Now, that resolution of the dominant seventh was hardly worth saving—at least it was not really new."

" Where did you get it from ? "

" I stole it out of the works of the musician whose bust was on your maestro's piano the other day, the one with the Dutch name who lived in Vienna."

" I hope you invented what the critic said ? "

" Not exactly. Your poet reminded me of something in Walt Whitman and I twisted it round and gave it to the critic."

" What's Walt Whitman ? Is he another Dutchman ? "

" He was an American poet, but his mother had a Dutch name."

" Did he come to the teatrino ? "

" He never came to Europe. I wish he had been to the teatrino. He would have liked your Escape from Paris, but perhaps he would not have cared so much for the paladins. He wrote something about them."

" What did he say ? "

" If he had seen the end of the story, when the angel takes Guido Santo's soul out of his mouth, I believe he would have said that instead of flying up to heaven he flew across the Atlantic with it and installed it 'amid the kitchen-

ware' to animate all the machinery and things in one of the Exhibitions held by the American Institute in New York."

"Is that what he said?"

"No. What he said was that all that world of romance was dead:

> Passed to its charnel vault—laid on the shelf—coffin'd
> with crown and armour on,
> Blazon'd with Shakespeare's purple page,
> And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

"Well, it is not true. But of course if he never came to the teatrino he could not know. Americans do come to the teatrino. I never know which are Americans and which are English; for the English come too. They come in the winter and the spring, and when they are pleased with some stage trick——"

"I suppose you mean with some miracle?"

"Of course," he replied; "it is the same thing. When they are pleased with some stage miracle, they clap their hands and applaud."

"That is nice and sympathetic of them."

"Yes, and they shout out loud and cry: 'Bravo, very good night.'"

"No, Buffo! Is that really what they say?"

"Yes, they shout: 'Bravo, very good night,' and it is a pleasure to hear them."

"I should think so. I must come in the winter next time and hear them say that."

"They all ask me some questions. I know what they mean, but I cannot speak to them, and, if you please, will you write down for me in English what I shall tell you, so that I can show them the paper?"

"Certainly, my dear Buffo, any little thing of that kind. If any of them come to see the Escape from Paris, I should think they will have a good many questions to ask. For instance, there is the Aurora"— He was finishing her off by putting a silver fillet round her hair and a shining star

upon her forehead—"I cannot help it, but I still feel unhappy about her. She does not explain herself."

"That will not signify. We must leave room for the imagination to play—not too much, but it is a mistake to be too exact. There must be some mystery which the public can take in any way they choose. It is like the nuts on the bicycle, they must not be left loose, but they must not be screwed too tight."

I gave way, saying: "I suspect you are right. It flatters the spectators to feel that they are helping the performance by using their imagination. And if they don't understand—well, they can think they do and that flatters them again. And there is another reason why we must not tell the public everything—it would take too long."

"Ah yes! We must not bore the public or they will not come again to the teatrino, and then where would the money come from to pay for my singing lessons?"

So we let the Cold Dawn follow among the rest. There were half a dozen rollicking blue-jackets off the warship in the port, they had been spending the evening with their girls and were escaping with them. When I objected that Paris was a sea-port town only in a Bohemian sense, he replied that that was enough for him; and when I said that if the sailors really had a ship anywhere near, they would have done better to escape by sea, he complained that I was being fastidious.

There were soldiers arm-in-arm and singing, they had been interrupted while drinking in a wine-shop in a side street off the Via Macqueda and were saving the marsala which they had not finished.

After them came the maresciallo dei carabinieri in the uniform he wears for a festa, with a plume in his three-cornered hat. He was a broad, beefy fellow, taller than the soldiers, being made of a marionette who is usually a giant. He came swinging along, all so big and so burly, followed by a lady, showily dressed, who walked mincingly and was saving a pair of pink satin shoes and a powder-puff. She

kept calling to him to stop, she wanted to speak to him. But he would not listen, he was not going to pay any attention to her—not in his gala uniform, it would not have been proper. Besides, there were people looking.

A blind musician with a broken nose and a falsetto voice was led by his mate who carried a 'cello. An interrupted wedding party followed, and school-children with their professors, sick people out of the hospital with doctors and nurses to help them, and a rabble of water-sellers, shoe-blacks, pedlars and men pushing carts.

Then followed the paladinessa Ettorina still mad, so mad that they were dragging her along and forcing her to escape while she struggled to get free and did not want to go, because a mad person does not understand danger. And paladins and warriors came—Amantebrava, Lungobello, Ottonetto and many more whose names I do not remember.

Last of all came Pope Gregorio III. He was not one to leave the city till the last of his flock had been saved. He wore his tiara and was in white robes with a red cross front and back ; he carried his crosier in his left hand and on his right thumb was a diamond ring which sparkled as he blessed the people. So he passed with his Secretary of State, his cardinals, his bishops, his monsignori, his acolytes, his chamberlains, his Guardia Nobile and his Swiss Guard ; some carried lighted candles, some carried banners and others crosses ; some were swinging incense and others were intoning the psalm *In Exitu Israel.* The solemn pomp of the procession disappeared into the opening of the subterranean road and the sound of the singing could no longer be heard. They were all safely gone. The stage was empty. Yet the curtain did not fall.

Then came a poor mad boy, a sordo-muto, who had been overlooked. He was in a great hurry, making frightful inarticulate noises and running this way and that, being too much alarmed to go straight. Before he had found the mouth of the tunnel the curtain fell and we did not see what became of him. He may have been left behind after all.

CATANIA

CHAPTER VII

THE BUFFO'S HOLIDAY

I DO not remember who started the idea that the buffo should come to Catania with me ; it grew up, as inevitable ideas do, without any of us being sure whether he suggested it, or Papa, or Gildo, or one of the sisters, or I, and it became the chief subject of conversation in the Greco family for days.

It would not be true to say that he had never been away from Palermo, because when he was a boy all the family went to try their fortune in Brazil and stayed there five years running a marionette theatre ; when they returned to Palermo, they left behind them in South America the eldest son, Gaetano, who still keeps a teatrino there. But the buffo saw no more of South America than he has seen of Sicily and, except for this five years in Brazil and an occasional day in the country round Palermo, had never been outside his native town. But he knew that Catania was on the other side of the island and near the sea, and expected it to be hotter than Palermo because of the propinquity of Etna. He paid no attention to my assurances that the temperature would be about the same and said he should bring his great-coat, not on account of the heat, but because he hoped that if he was seen with it he might be taken for an English tourist.

We did not start from Palermo together. I had to go to Caltanissetta, which is on a line that branches off at S. Caterina Xirbi from the main line between Palermo and Catania. We arranged to meet at the junction three days after I left Palermo. I got there from Caltanissetta just before the train from Palermo arrived, and the buffo was

looking out of the window. As soon as he saw me on the platform he got down and came to me saying :

" Oh ! I am so glad to see you again ; now everything will be all right. I have been wretched ever since you went away. I have not been able to eat by night or to sleep by day for thinking of you. And this has been going on for two whole months ; but now I shall recover."

So we got into the train and pursued our journey.

" I see you have brought your great-coat," I said.

" Yes," he said, " if I am to be an English gentleman I shall have to wear it in Catania."

" But won't it do if you carry it over your arm ? " I inquired.

" No," he said, " because then they would see my other coat, and that is so dilapidated they would suspect the truth."

" Your clothes are quite good enough for any English gentleman anywhere," I pointed out.

" They are not so good as yours," he replied ; " the teatrino is dirty and they soon wear out. My great-coat appears to be fresh because I seldom put it on. I shall use it in Catania to conceal the shabbiness of my other clothes."

" You need not be so particular. My father when he travelled in Italy did not pay so much attention to his personal appearance."

" You have never told me about your father. Did he travel for some English firm ? Was it tiles ? or perhaps sewing-machines ? They pay better, I believe."

" He did not travel for any firm. He was a barrister, an avvocato, and travelled for recreation during the Long Vacation. I can tell you how he used to dress, because just before I left London I copied part of a letter he wrote to my mother, and I have it in my pocket."

This is the extract from my father's letter which I read to the buffo ; it is dated Hôtel des Bergues, Geneva, 1 October, 1861 :

Reading the *Times* of Friday this morning I saw a letter signed G.U. which I have no doubt is a mistake for J.U. and means John Unthank and which signifies he and his family are in Paris. It is a letter complaining of the shabby costume of Englishmen and is a foolish letter but it will have the effect of making me furnish myself with a new wideawake or something of that sort at Paris for my present wideawake has got another hole in it and is really very bad though I don't know why it should wear so fast as I take great care of it and am rather disappointed that it should fall to pieces. Mr. Unthank pointed out to me on the Lake of Como that my dressing-gown which I always wear travelling is out at elbows which indeed I find it is but that fact seemed to grieve Mr. Unthank less than the shabbiness of my hat and he offered to give me a new one that is a wideawake of his own which had been newly lined and not worn as he said since it was lined if I would throw my old wideawake away. I consented but I left Milan before he had an opportunity of performing his promise.

"It was kind of your father's friend to offer him his old hat; don't you think so?"

"Yes, very kind of him. But, you see, he had his reasons."

"Of course, he did not want to be seen with anyone so badly dressed."

"That is what he says in his letter to the *Times*. I copied that in the British Museum. He does not mention my father by name, he merely speaks of well-dressed Englishmen in Paris (by which he means people like himself) frequently seeing a respectable professional man disguised as an omnibus conductor or cab-driver and 'being compelled to stand talking with a vulgar-looking object because they have unfortunately recognised an old acquaintance and not had time to run across the road to avoid him.' My father, no doubt, thought of Mr. Unthank's conversations with him at Como and Milan and said to himself, 'That's me.' The cap fitted him and he put it on."

" Excuse me ; your father cannot have put the cap on, he says he had to leave Milan too soon for that."

" O my dear Buffo, I am so sorry. When I said the cap, I did not mean the wideawake, I was only using an English idiom."

" I see, I understand. We also have a similar expression, but it is not about hats, it is about boots, I think, or coats. I will find out and tell you."

" My father does not say he ' had to leave ' ; he only says he left ; and my mother, who agreed with his friends and thought his taste in dress deplorable, believed that he ran away to escape from Mr. Unthank's hat."

" Oh ! but a hat is always worth something. I should have waited for the hat. Was it really a very bad one ? "

" I do not remember it, I should think it must have been pretty bad. The dressing-gown was awful. It was maroon, and his friends called it his wife's mantle. After he left off wearing it, it was given to us children for dressing up. It was no use for anything else and it was not much use for that. So you see, Buffo, you need not trouble about your clothes if you want to appear English. You do not look in the least like a cab-driver."

" Perhaps not ; but I think it will be safer for me not to be an Englishman. All this about your father's dressing-gown happened half a century ago, and the letter and the article in the *Times* must have done some good because the English gentlemen who come to the teatrino do not dress like that now. You are always beautifully dressed."

" Thank you very much, Buffo, but if that is more than merely one of your Sicilian compliments, it only shows that I inherit my ideas about dress from my mother rather than from my father."

" I think I had better be a Portuguese gentleman from Rio, a friend of yours, over on a visit, and you shall be a Sicilian."

" We will be a couple of cavalieri erranti like Guido Santo and Argantino on their travels. But I do not think

it will quite do for me to be a Sicilian. I cannot talk dialect and I cannot gesticulate. And then, am I not too well dressed ? "

" That will not matter ; you shall be an aristocratic Sicilian, they are often quite well dressed. And as for the dialect and the gesticulation, it is now the fashion among the upper classes to speak Tuscan and not to gesticulate. It is considered more—I cannot remember the word, I saw it in the *Giornale di Sicilia*, it is an English word."

" Do you mean it is more chic ? "

" It is not exactly that and chic is a French word. One moment, if you please. It is—we say lo snobismo."

" I see. Very well ; I will play the Sicilian snob, but I never saw one so I shall have to do it extempore as Snug had to play the part of Lion."

" What is Snug ? another American poet ? "

" He was a joiner and lived in Athens at the time when all the good things happened. But his father, the author of his being, as we say, was an English poet and cast him for the part of Lion in *Pyramus and Thisbe*."

" What is Thisbe ? a wandering knight ? "

" No. Thisbe was the lady loved by Pyramus and was acted by Flute the bellows-mender. It's all in that poet who said what I told you when we were making the Escape from Paris—you remember, about holding the mirror up to nature."

" I wish I could read your English poets. I like everything English. The Englishmen who come to the teatrino are always good and kind—tutti bravi—I wish I were an Englishman—a real one I mean, like you."

Here were more compliments, so I replied : " I wish I were a Sicilian buffo."

" Ah ! but you could not be that," said he. " Now I could have my hair cut short, grow a beard on my chin, a pair of spectacles on my eyes and heels on my boots and then I should only have to be naturalised. But you could never be a buffo—not even an English one."

"No; I suppose not. You see, I'm too serious. Gildo says I take a gloomy view of life."

"Yes," he agreed, "why do you?"

"I don't know," I replied. "My poor mother—my adorata mamma, as you call her—used to make the same complaint. She thought I inherited my desponding temperament from my father."

"As you inherited your taste in dress from her."

"Just so. But I think I am like Orlando and your other paladins, and that I am as I am because it was the will of heaven."

"That is only another way of saying the same thing," observed the buffo; which rather surprised me because I did not know he took such a just view of the significance of evolution.

On arriving at Catania we went to the albergo and, instead of following the usual course and giving his Christian name and surname, Alessandro Greco, he preferred to specify his profession and describe himself as "Tenore Greco." They posted this up in the hall under my name, with the unexpected result that the other guests ignored him, thinking the words applied to me and that I was a tenor singer from Greece.

The first thing to be done was to go out and get something to eat, and as we went along the buffo expressed his delight with the appearance of Catania. He had no idea that such a town could exist outside Palermo or Brazil.

"It is beautiful," he exclaimed, "yes, and I shall always declare that it is beautiful. But, my dear Enrico, will you be kind enough to tell me why it is so black?"

"That, my dear Buffo," I replied, "is on account of the lava."

"But how do you mean—the lava? What is this lava that you speak of, and how does it darken the houses and the streets?"

To which I replied as follows: "The lava is that mass of fire which issues from Etna and then dissolves itself and

becomes formed into black rock, and, as it is excessively hard, the people of Catania use it for building their houses and for paving their streets."

I do not remember expressing myself precisely in these words, but the buffo wrote me an account of his holiday and this is what he says I said. It seems that I continued thus:

"This house, for example, is built of lava, this pavement is lava, those columns are lava, that elephant over the fountain is sculptured in lava, this is lava, that is lava, everything is lava; even those——"

"Stop, stop," interrupted the buffo, "for pity's sake stop, or I shall begin to think that you and I also are made of lava."

We reached the Birraria Svizzera and sat down.

"Are you hungry, Buffo?"

"I am always hungry. My subterranean road is always ready."

"That's capital," I replied. "And what particular fugitive would you like to send down it now?"

"Seppia and interiori di pollo," he replied without hesitation.

Now the first of these is cuttle-fish and looks as though the cook in sending to table something that ought to have been thrown away had tried to conceal it by emptying a bottle of ink into the dish; the second is un-selected giblets. So I replied:

"Very well; but I don't think I'll join you. No one will believe I am a Sicilian unless I eat maccaroni, and perhaps I will have a veal cutlet afterwards; that will be more suited to my subterranean road."

"You had better have what I have," said he, "it is exquisite."

"Not to-day," I replied gently.

So we ate our dinner and discussed what we should do during the evening. He wanted to go to the marionette theatre, and I was not surprised, for I remembered that the

vergers of Westminster Abbey and of Salisbury Cathedral spend their holidays making tours to visit other cathedrals ; cooks go to Food Exhibitions ; Scotch station-masters come to London and spend their time in the Underground railways ; and English journalists when they meet on an outing, say to one another :

" It is a foggy morning ; let us go in and split three or four infinitives."

So I took him to the Teatro Sicilia and introduced him to the proprietor, Gregorio Grasso, a half-brother of Giovanni Grasso, and we went behind the scenes to study the difference between the Catanian and the Palermitan systems. He was first struck by the immense size of the place as compared with his own little theatre ; next by the orchestra which, instead of being a mechanical piano turned by a boy, consisted of a violin, a guitar and a double-bass played by men ; and finally by the manner of manipulating the figures, which distressed him so seriously that he forgot he was a Portuguese gentleman and began to give Gregorio a lesson to show him how much better we do things in Palermo ; but it came to nothing, because a method that produces a good effect when applied to a small and fairly light marionette will not do when applied to one that is nearly a metre and a half high and weighs about fifty kilogrammes ; it is like trying to play an elaborate violin passage on the horn. Soon we were politely invited to go to the front, where we were shown into good places, and the performance began. In the auditorium there was the familiar, pleasant, faint crackling of melon seeds and peanuts which the people were munching as at home, and a man pushing his way about among them selling lemonade, and water with a dash of anise in it.

The buffo thought the marionettes of Catania were magnificent, well-modelled and sumptuously dressed ; but their size and their weight make it impossible for them to move with the delicacy and naturalness which he and his father and brother know so well how to impart to those at

home. They may start fairly well, but sooner or later the figure will betray to the public the fatigue of the operator who is standing exhausted on the platform behind, no longer capable of communicating any semblance of life to the limbs of the puppet. He did not, however, arrive at this conclusion all at once, for, in the course of the performance when I asked him how it was that the marionettes of Catania were not more expressive, he replied:

"I suppose it must be on account of the lava."

The figures appear against the back-cloth and the operator cannot reach forward to bring them nearer to the audience, thus the front part of the stage is free—or rather it would be free, but the public are permitted to stray on to it, and thus the stage presents a picture of marionettes with two or three live people sitting at each side.

"Buffo mio," I said, "does it appear to you to be a good plan that the public should go on the stage and mingle with the paladins? It is not allowed in our own theatre at home."

"I am not sure that it is a bad plan," he replied, "it is true we do not allow it in Palermo; but one moment, if you please, there is something coming into my head. Ah! yes, it is about holding up the mirror to nature. Now here, in Catania, this stage presents a truer mirror of nature than ours in Palermo. For have you not observed in life that, with the exception of a few really sensible people like you and me, most men are merely puppets in the hands of others? They do not act on their own ideas nor do they think for themselves; also they adopt any words that are put into their mouths. Now, it seems to me that the proportion of real men compared with marionettes is not greater on this stage than we observe it to be in life, and therefore we may say that the proprietor of this theatre is following the advice of your poet."

He noticed that one of the chief characteristics of the Catanian marionettes comes into evidence when they are fighting. Two of them take up their positions opposite each

other, sidling round and round like fighting cocks preparing to set to ; they raise their scimitars, cross them and rub them one against the other, like butchers sharpening their knives ; after a certain time spent in this sword exercise, they cross the stage and, turning suddenly round, face one another and strike ; the consequence of this manœuvre is that they both fall to the ground. We were looking on at such a duel and when the climax came the buffo rose to his feet and clapped his hands expecting the rest of the public to join, but to his surprise they remained cold, and declined " to crown his applause with their acquiescence," as he expressed it. He turned wonderingly to the young man who was selling lemonade and said, speaking with difficulty in broken Tuscan, as a Portuguese gentleman from Rio might be expected to do :

" Tell me, Caro mio, why do not the public join me in applauding ? "

" My dear Sir," replied the young man, " it is out of the question. You do not seem to be aware of the identity of the marionette who has just been killed. He is a Christian and the brother-in-law of Rinaldo. He is Ruggiero, a very noble youth. The public do not applaud, because they are sorry for his death and, besides, it would be an insult to Rinaldo if they were to applaud at the death of his brother-in-law."

On hearing this the buffo borrowed my handkerchief and wiped away two tears, one from each of his eyes, then he returned it politely and began mumbling to himself.

" What are you saying ? " I inquired. " Why do you speak so low ? "

" Oh, it's nothing," he replied, " I was merely reciting a prayer for the repose of the soul of poor Ruggiero."

The next morning I was down before him and had nearly finished my coffee when he came slowly and sadly into the dining-room. I said :

" Good morning, Buffo mio, and I hope you have had a good night and slept well after your long journey and your evening at the theatre."

He sat down, put his arm on the table and mournfully rested his head on his hand.

" My dear Enrico," he said, " I have passed a night of horror. I did not get to sleep at all, and then I was continually waking up again——"

" Nonsense, Buffo," I exclaimed.

" But it's not nonsense. Ah ! you do not know what it is to lie awake all night, sleepless and trembling, between sheets that are made of lava, and to hear footsteps and the clanking of armour and to see Rinaldo shining in the dark and threatening you as he holds over you his sword, Fusberta, and shouts in your ear : ' How dare you applaud when my brother-in-law is killed ? ' "

He seemed to enjoy his coffee, however, and to be ready for plenty of exertion. He wanted a piece of lava to take home with him, and would it not be possible to pick up a piece if we went to the slopes of Etna ? So we made inquiries and were told where to find the station of the Circum-Etnea Railway and started soon after breakfast for Paternò. The soil was black with lava and the wind was tremendous and carried the gritty dust into our mouths and down our necks. In that way he got plenty of lava to take home, but he wanted a large piece, and we could not stop the train and get out and break a piece of rock off, besides, we had nothing to break it with. We were like that old sailor in the poem who was surrounded by water, water everywhere, but not a drop of a kind to satisfy his immediate requirements. It was just as bad at Paternò ; from the station to the town all our energies were required to get along in the blinding wind and the stinging dust and then we had to have our luncheon.

" And what would you like for colazione, Buffo ? "

" Seppia and interiori di pollo, if you please."

But he had to be a Sicilian and eat maccaroni with me,

because the inn could not provide what he wanted. Altogether the day was perhaps something of a failure, and we returned without the piece of lava.

In the evening we went to the Birraria Svizzera, and he ate his seppia while I got through my maccaroni. When his interiori di pollo came I said:

"I will do my best to eat what you eat, not exactly but as nearly as I can. Instead of a veal cutlet I will have part of an esteriore di pollo. It rather surprises me that you should always eat the same things. Gildo said you like plenty of variety."

"So I do," he replied. "Look at my plate. Can you imagine a more delicious variety?"

I looked and said: "Certainly there is variety; I doubt whether our English fowls could show so much. But—well, as long as you like it——"

Being rather tired after our day in the country we did not go to any theatre, we stayed in the Birraria till bed-time talking and listening to the music.

Next day was the last of the buffo's holiday, and I proposed another excursion, but he said:

"Suppose we pretend that we have come to Catania on an excursion, and then we can spend the day in the city. I want to buy some things to take home with me for my sisters."

Accordingly we looked in the shop-windows and chose three ornamental combs made of celluloid for the three sisters, a snuff-box for papa, made of dried bergamot skin smelling so as to scent the snuff, and a pair of braces for Gildo. It seemed a pity that the buffo should not have something also, so he chose for himself a handkerchief with a picture of the elephant of lava over the fountain in the piazza and he gave me in return a metal pencil-case. Then the question of the piece of lava had to be taken up again. We consulted the landlord, who produced a bit—exactly

what was wanted and only one franc fifty. We had been wandering about in search of it and there it was all the time in the same house with us.

"What on earth are you going to do with it, Buffo?"

"Why, everyone who goes to Catania brings home a piece of lava."

"Yes, but what do they want it for? It might be a neat chimney ornament, but you have no fireplace in your house. Or you might use it as a paper-weight, but in your family you scarcely ever write a letter."

He looked at me sadly for a moment and then said:

"I thought you were an artist and now you are being practical. Usefulness is not everything. This piece of lava will be for me an object of eternal beauty, and when I contemplate it I shall think of the happy time we have spent here together."

I said: "O Buffo! don't go on like that or you will make me cry."

In the evening we went to the Teatro Machiavelli and saw a performance by living players. In the first act a good young man introduced Rosina to the cavaliere, who congratulated him on having won the affections of so virtuous and lovely a girl. The cavaliere gave a bad old woman one hundred francs, and in return she promised to procure him an interview with Rosina. The bad old woman persuaded Rosina to enter a house in which we knew the cavaliere was. The good young man asked the bad old woman what she had done with his girl; of course she had done nothing with her, but we heard shrieks. The good young man became suspicious, broke open the door of the house and, on learning the worst, shot the bad old woman dead and was taken by the police.

"This seems as though it were going to be a very interesting play," said the buffo when the curtain had fallen.

"Yes," said I, "what do you think will happen next?"

"You ought to know that," he replied; "it's no use asking me. I never saw a Sicilian play in Rio."

" Of course not ; I was forgetting. I should say that the good young man will be acquitted because it was justifiable homicide or that he will return after a short term of imprisonment ; in any case I think he will marry Rosina and live happily ever after."

" I see," he replied. " You think it will be a comedy. People who take a gloomy view of life naturally expect something cheerful in the theatre. But what if it is a tragedy ? And how are you going to dispose of the cavaliere ? Is he to carry his wickedness through your comedy ? "

" You want it to be a tragedy because you are a buffo, I suppose. Now let me think. If you are right——"

Before I could see my way to a tragic plot, the curtain rose on Act II. The women of the village were going to Mass, but Rosina, reduced to ragged misery, fell on the steps, not worthy to enter. The cavaliere came by and offered her money, which she indignantly spurned. A good old woman, who happened to be passing, scowled at the cavaliere and kindly led Rosina away. An old man returned from America, where he had been for twenty years to escape the consequences of a crime the details of which he ostentatiously suppressed. This was his native village ; he began recognising things and commenting on the changes. Rosina came to him begging. He looked at her and passed his hand over his eyes as he said :

" My girl, why are you begging at your age—so young, so fair ? "

" Ah ! Old man, I am in ragged misery because my father committed a crime."

" A crime ! What crime ? "

So Rosina told him about it and the escape of the criminal to America. The tears in her voice were so copious that her words were nearly drowned, but that did not signify ; we were intelligent enough to have already guessed the relationship between them and we knew that she must be supplying the details which he had suppressed.

He struggled with his surging emotions as he watched her delivering her sad tale and we felt more and more certain that we must be right. There came a pause. She buried her face in her hands. The old man spoke:

"Twenty years, did you say?"

"Twenty years."

"And what was your mother's name?"

"Concetta."

"Dio mio! And your name?"

"Rosina."

"Mia figlia!"

"Mio padre!"

Here they fell into each other's arms and the orchestra let loose a passage of wild allegria which it had been holding in reserve. The revelation of the cause of the ragged misery followed and was nearing its conclusion when the cavaliere happened to pass by. Rosina pointed him out to her father, who first made a speech at him and then shot him dead. Rosina wept over his body, although she hated him, and the curtain fell.

"That was very beautiful," said the buffo. "Do you still think it will be a comedy? I still believe it will be a tragedy."

"I am not sure," I replied, "but we shall soon know. Did not the old man listen well?"

"Yes. It was like life. Did you observe how he made little calculations for himself while she told him the story?"

"Yes, and one could see it all agreed with what he knew."

"He was like your father reading his friend's letter. The cap fitted him and he put it on."

"Bravo, Buffo!"

"And when he made as though he would stroke her hair and drew back because he was not yet sure—oh, it was beautiful! But there was one thing I did not quite understand. Why did the cavaliere fall dead?"

" Because the father shot him," I replied.

" He aimed in the other direction."

" I also noticed that the old man fired to the right and the cavaliere fell on his left, but that was only because of a little defect of stage management. It does not do to be fastidious. You must not forget that they are doing the play as Snug the joiner did Lion, it has never been written. It will go more smoothly next time."

" Thank you. You see, I am not a regular theatre-goer. There is another thing that puzzled me. You remember the bad old woman in the first act who was shot ? Should you think I was being too fastidious if I asked you why she rose from the dead and led Rosina kindly away in the second act ? No doubt it will be explained presently, but, in the meantime, if you——"

" She did not rise from the dead ; it was a different woman."

" It was the same woman."

" Anyone could tell you are a Portuguese or an Englishman or whatever you are—a foreigner of some kind ; no Sicilian would make such an objection. It was the same actress, but a different character in the drama. That was either because they have not enough ladies in the company, or because the lady who ought to have taken one part or the other is away on a holiday, or because the lady who acted wanted to show she could do a good old woman and a bad old woman equally well."

" Thank you very much. You can hardly expect— But hush ! they are beginning the third act, which will explain everything."

The curtain rose again. The background represented an elegant circular temple built of sponge cake, strawberry ice and spangles ; it stood at the end of a perspective of columns constructed of the same materials, and between the columns were green bushes in ornamental flower-pots —all very pretty and gay—" molto bellissimo," as the buffo said. The orchestra struck up a jigging tune in six-

eight time in a minor key with a refrain in the tonic major, and a washed-out youth in evening dress with a receding forehead, a long, bony nose, an eye-glass, prominent upper-teeth, no chin, a hat on the back of his head, a brown great-coat over his arm, shiny boots, a cigarette and a silver-topped cane, entered. I whispered:

"Is he dressed well enough for an Englishman?"

"Yes," whispered the buffo, "but this is no Englishman. Don't you see who it is and where we are? This is the good young man in paradise. His punishment has been too much for him and he has died in prison."

"But, Buffo mio," I objected, "it's a different person altogether; it's not a bit like him."

"It may be a different actor—I think it is—but it is the same character in the drama. That is either because they have too many men in the company, or because the actor who did the good young man in the first act has gone home to supper and another is finishing his part for him, or because—I can't think of any other reason just now, and I want to hear what he is saying."

Except for his clothes, the creature on the stage was little more than a limp and a dribble, but there was enough of him to sing a song telling us in the Neapolitan dialect that his notion of happiness was to stroll up and down the Toledo ogling the girls. When he had finished acknowledging the applause he departed and his place was taken by a lady no longer young, in flimsy pale blue muslin, a low neck and sham diamonds. There lingered about her a hungry wistfulness, as though she were still hoping to get a few more drops of enjoyment out of the squeezed orange of her wasted life.

"And this must be Rosina," whispered the buffo; "Dio mio, how death has aged her!" Seeing I was about to speak, he interrupted me: "It does not do to be fastidious. No real Sicilian would make any objection."

The lady sang a song telling us in the Neapolitan dialect that her notion of happiness was to stroll up and down the

Toledo ogling the men. When she had finished acknowledging the applause she departed and, almost immediately, they both came on together.

"I told you so," exclaimed the buffo triumphantly; "they have met in paradise and are happy at last."

They performed a duet in the Neapolitan dialect and showed us how they strolled up and down the Toledo ogling one another. After they had finished acknowledging the applause the curtain fell and we all left the theatre. I said:

"I do not know whether you are aware of what you have done, but by making that temple of spangled pastry into heaven you have wrecked your tragedy."

"Oh, I gave up my tragedy as soon as I saw where we were, and the play ended quite in your manner, didn't it? like the Comedy of Dante. Or do you mean that you have any doubts about that last act taking place in heaven?"

"I have many doubts about that."

"I admit, of course, that it would have been more satisfactory, and much clearer as a comedy, if we could have seen them both die before they went to paradise."

"Would you like me to tell you the plain, straightforward, honest, manly, brutal truth about it?"

"Very much indeed, if you don't mind; but I should not like you to strain yourself on my account."

"All right, Buffo, I'll be careful. Now listen. I don't believe that the last act, as you call it, had anything to do with the story. It was a music-hall turn added at the end of the play merely to close the entertainment and send the audience away in good spirits."

"But that wrecks your comedy. And if the play was neither comedy nor tragedy, what was it? You cannot expect a simple Portuguese gentleman from Rio to understand your Sicilian dramas all at once."

"And we have not time now to discuss the question exhaustively, for if you do not go to bed immediately you will never be up to-morrow in time to catch your train back to Palermo, and if you are late what will papa say

and what will the public think when they find nothing ready in the teatrino ? "

" That is true. Good night and thank you very much for my holiday and for all you have done for me."

" Prego, prego ; I thank you for giving me the pleasure of your company."

" Not at all."

" But I assure you——"

" If you go on like this I shall begin to cry, and then I shall not sleep at all, and that will be worse than sitting up to discuss the play. So good night, finally."

" Good night, Buffo. You will forgive me if I do not see you off in the morning ; I do not want to get up at half-past five. I wish you Buon viaggio. Give my love to papa and Gildo and my respectful compliments to the sisters. Have you got your lump of lava and all your other goods ? That's right. Sleep well and do not dream of Rosina and the good young man."

" Arrivederci."

TRAPANI

CHAPTER VIII

THE NASCITA

Once I was at Trapani in September, and observed in a small shop in a back street some queer little dolls' heads made of wax. They seemed to form a set, some women and some men, and there were hands of wax to match. I did not think much about them, one cannot very well investigate everything one notices in a Sicilian town, and, as I turned away, these little heads were driven out of mine by Ignazio Giacalone, who was coming down the street. He is a young avvocato whom I have known since he was a student. He told me that he was going to be married next day, and invited me to his wedding.

In the evening another friend of mine, also an avvocato, Alberto Scalisi, came to the albergo to take his coffee and, as we all sat smoking and talking, something was said about an article on the Nascita written by him and recently published in *L'Amico*, a Trapanese Sunday newspaper. I knew nothing about the Nascita, but I knew something about the avvocato whose acquaintance I had made a few years previously at the house of my friend Signor Decio D'Ali, with whom I had been dining. After dinner many guests, including the avvocato Scalisi, came to the house to rehearse a play they were preparing for a charity performance; they were all amateurs, and I never saw amateurs act so well. The Signora Decio D'Ali and the Avvocato Scalisi were the best; his was a comic part, and he did it with so much natural humour that I was anxious to read his article whatever the Nascita might be, as to which they gave me some preliminary information. They reminded me of the Presepio, the representation of

the Natività at Bethlehem, which it is the custom in many places to make at Christmas ; there is a most elaborate one, treated as though the event had happened in modern times, preserved in the convent of S. Martino, in Naples ; there is one in the Musée de Cluny in Paris, *L'Adoration des Rois et des Bergers*, Art Napolitain XVIII siècle. I was most familiar with such things in the chapels on the Sacro Monte at Varallo-Sesia, where the figures are the size of life. When they saw I had got hold of the idea, they told me that in Trapani it is the custom in the homes of the sailors to celebrate the 8th September by making a representation of the house of S. Joachim as it appeared on the occasion of the birth of his daughter, the Madonna, and to keep it on view for three weeks, till S. Michael's day. They do not do this in any other town, and the avvocato's article was about one he had seen.

Next morning about 7.30 Ignazio's father most politely called for me in a carriage and pair and, accompanied by two other guests, we drove to the house of the bride's family, where there was a crowd of people, and we were all presented ; then we proceeded to the Municipio, where the civil part of the marriage was performed ; after which we returned to the bride's house and went through the religious service at an altar that had been erected in one of the rooms. We admired the presents and the flowers, partook of refreshments and exchanged compliments till it was time to go, and I carried away with me a copy of *L'Amico* given me by the Avvocato Scalisi, who was one of the guests.

While reading his article I recognised that the little waxen heads and hands must be part of the raw material for a Nascita, and in my mind I identified certain figures in the museum which Conte Pepoli was then arranging in the disused convent of the Annunziata as remains of old examples of the Nascita and of the Natività. Nothing would do for it then but I must see a Nascita, and the difficulty was how to proceed. One cannot very well go

round knocking at all the doors in a Sicilian town and asking if they have made a Nascita ; the Avvocato Scalisi had gone off to another wedding or to defend a mafioso, or to transact whatever business falls to the lot of a Trapanese avvocato. Mario, my coachman, takes no interest in anything to do with religion in any shape, so he was no use, and everyone else I spoke to was very kind about it but evidently did not know how to help me.

I considered what I should do if at Hastings or Grimsby or Newlyn I wanted to get inside a fisherman's cottage, and it occurred to me that I should consult the parson. I knew a priest at Trapani whose acquaintance I had made at Custonaci, but I did not know where he was. I boldly stopped a couple of strange priests in the street and asked if they knew my priest ; they did, and one of them took me to his house. It was rather mean of me to call upon him merely to ask him to help me to find a Nascita, I ought to have wanted to salute him and enjoy his company ; but he did not appear to think it rude, and we went together to the old part of the town where the sailors live and asked at a house where he knew they always used to make a Nascita, but this year there was none. They told us of another likely house, but again we were disappointed. We tried several more without success, and at last I exclaimed :

" What a lack of faith ! "

But my priest replied that that was not the explanation ; it was lack of money, because these things cannot be made for nothing.

We could not then call at more houses because he was busy with his own affairs ; it was his dinner-time, or he had to go to a wedding or a funeral or to do whatever it is that Trapanese priests do in the afternoon, so we postponed our search till the evening, when he returned with his brother, another priest, who knew a family who had made a Nascita, and we went to their house.

We were shown into a large room, at the end of which, on

a long table, was a sort of rabbit hutch or doll's house, all on one floor, about eighteen inches high, with the front off showing that it was divided into eight square compartments, so that the whole hutch was about twelve feet long, the width of the room. These compartments were the rooms of Joachim's house or flat, as we should say, and the figures in them were about eight inches high. In the arts actual size counts for little and, as with the marionettes, I soon accepted the dolls as representatives of men and women and felt as though I were present at some such family festival as Ignazio's wedding, and the rooms, all leading one into the other, contributed to the illusion.

We were asked to begin with the entrance. The front part of it had been let to a cobbler who was sitting at his bench mending a shoe, and if it had been real life he would have been singing. Behind him was a garden of artificial flowers with a fountain of real water that was not playing that evening. A door led through the side wall into the second compartment, which was a salone. The porter, in evening dress, was introducing a married couple, also in evening dress, who had been invited and were accompanied by their baby in the arms of the wet-nurse. This compartment was divided by a partition with an open door through which one saw an alcove, or back room, with a buffet loaded with sweets, cakes, and ices, at which the guests were to refresh themselves as they passed. At Ignazio's wedding footmen carried the refreshments about on trays. A door in the side led to the third compartment, where children were dancing to a toy piano with four real notes. I struck one and it sounded. A lady doll was playing, and I looked at her music, but the notes were too small for my eyes, so I asked our hostess what music it was, and she replied that it was a selection from the *Geisha*. I remembered then that there had recently been in the town a travelling opera company performing that work which is so popular in Italy that one often hears

the boys whistling the airs in the streets. A surname is not of much practical use in Sicily, and some of my friends have not mastered mine, but by those who know it, and who also know that it is the same as that of the composer of the *Geisha*, I have sometimes been credited with the music of his opera, a compliment which it distresses me to be compelled to decline. In the alcove behind were musicians playing guitars. I did not strike a note on a guitar, feeling sure that it would be out of tune with the piano.

A door in the side wall led to the fourth room, where S. Joachim was entertaining four kings who wore their crowns. These kings have nothing to do with Gaspare, Melchiorre, and Baldassare, who fall down and worship the infant Jesus, opening their treasures and presenting unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh, on the occasion of the Natività. Those three were led from the East to the manger at Bethlehem by the miraculous star ; these in Joachim's room came in response to the usual cards of invitation sent by the family, just as the relations and guests came to Ignazio's wedding. The Madonna had, I think my priest told me, forty kings and sixty condottieri in her pedigree. Invitations had been issued to all their descendants, and no doubt all had accepted, but, owing to want of means on the part of the artist who made this Nascita and want of space in the rabbit hutch, only four kings could be shown. It is not everyone who can entertain so many as four kings ; there were none at Ignazio's wedding. In this room there was also a monsignore with red buttons to his sottana, he had an attendant who, my priest told me, was a seminarista. In the alcove behind was Joachim's bed, and the empty cup from which he had drunk his morning black coffee stood on the table by his bedside.

The door leading to the fifth room was partly concealed by a notice with these words : " È Nata Maria," and, accordingly, here we found the new-born child in an elaborate

cradle attended by three angels who were planted on the floor in front of her, rather a Christmas-cardy group. Four queens with crowns had come, no doubt they were the wives of Joachim's kings, and there was a Jewish priest whom I took to be Simeon, he had a head-covering with horns such as Caiaphas wears at Varallo. My priest, however, assured me that Simeon was not a priest, he was only "un uomo qualunque"; and he would have it that the figure represented Melchizedek. This occasion must not be confused with a subsequent one when the *Nunc Dimittis* was improvised by Simeon, who, he said, could not have lived long enough to be present on both occasions.

"Reverend Father," I objected, "pardon me if I give you an example which points in the other direction. The best man or, as you would say, the compare at my grandfather's wedding not only lived to perform the ceremony of marrying my father and mother, but lived long enough also to marry my brother."

The priest wavered, but was not convinced; he repeated that this was Melchizedek and that he always appears at the birth of the Madonna, and I was so much under the spell of the Nascita that I could not remember precisely when Melchizedek lived. Whoever this personage was, he had passed into this room from Joachim's room on the day of the Sacred Name of Maria, that is on the Sunday after the birth, and he had officiated at the baptism. On the floor was a bath of water with cinnamon, in which the baby had been washed and with which the guests were to cross themselves. S. Anna was in her bedroom in the alcove behind, but not in bed, she got up and sat in a chair on the ninth day after the birth.

Through the door in the side the guests were to pass to the sixth room, where there were nuns engaged in household duties, mending the linen, darning the stockings, and so on. One was working a sewing-machine, and in the alcove behind was their bedroom.

The side door led to the seventh room, where there was another nun ironing and directing the servants who were making quince marmalade and extract of pomidoro and discharging similar autumnal duties; behind was the servants' bedroom.

Lastly we came to the eighth room, which, like the front entrance, filled the whole compartment and had no alcove. This was the kitchen and dining-room in one. The hospitable board was spread with such profusion that there was not room on it for another egg-cup. Here Joachim was to entertain the kings and queens to dinner later on. Three Turks and one female servant were controlling affairs, making the cuscuso and preparing the maccaroni. There were young chickens in a corner; I inquired for their mother, and was told she was busy making the soup; then I saw that a saucepan was simmering on the stove. The walls were hung with brightly polished copper cooking utensils and there were baskets of maccaroni on the floor.

The three principal rooms were carpeted with tissue-paper advertisements of a new bar in the Via Torrearsa which has lately been opened by relations of our host. Each room was lighted by a naked candle kept in place upon the floor by a drop of wax. All the walls were hung with wall-papers, originally designed for larger apartments, and adorned with pictures, among which I observed Carlo Dolci's *Ecce Homo*. The Avvocato Scalisi saw, or says he saw, two saints flanking an advertisement of cod-liver oil, and in Joachim's room was a portrait of Pope Pius X blessing the company which included besides the kings a couple of officers in uniform. But then the Avvocato Scalisi is a humorist, and the trouble with humorists is that they are too fond of assuming all their readers to be humorists also, whereas they sometimes have a reader of another kind who is puzzled to know whether what they say is to be taken seriously or not.

We were about to make our compliments preliminary to departure, when our host produced a tray with marsala

and biscuits, so we sat down for a few minutes and I observed what I took to be a little waxen paladin among the wine-glasses. He was, however, no paladin, though he wore armour and a helmet; he was S. Michele waiting to arrive on his festa, the 29th September. It was now the 20th and, partly to please me and partly because it did not much matter for a day or two, he arrived at once. He had wings, but they wanted repairing, so I carried him carefully from the tray and deposited him in the corner of the room in which the baby lay.

My priest found several other examples of the Nascita and took me to see them before I left Trapani. The differences were slight; in one case there were only three rooms; in another the rooms were divided so as to vary in size; in another the rooms had windows at the back with balconies. Sometimes the guests were reading the *Giornale di Sicilia*, and I saw opera-glasses on the table in one room and in another the gentlemen had deposited their tall hats on the sofa. There were book-cases full of books and the bedrooms were furnished down to the most insignificant but necessary details. S. Joachim in one of the houses was entertaining only three friends, and they had no kingly marks upon them; they were perhaps descendants of the condottieri. I thought afterwards of going back to inquire, but one cannot very well return to a house where one has seen a Nascita and ask to be allowed to look again to make sure whether or not the guests have hung up their crowns on the hat pegs of the umbrella-stand at the front entrance. There was something about these gentlemen, something in their costume as they sat at a round table with S. Joachim, a queer 1830 feeling that put me in mind of Mr. Pickwick and his three friends sitting in their private room at the "George and Vulture," George Yard, Lombard Street, except that they were only drinking coffee.

In the garden at the entrance to one house was a baby taking the air in a perambulator and a band of eight

musicians with a conductor. There was real water with a tap and a basin in the kitchen so that the guests might wash their hands after dinner. There was a mouse-trap in the corner of the kitchen. In one room the guests were playing cards, in another eating ices, and I observed a toy piano with the extended compass of six notes.

In all the kitchens there was a Turk for the cuscuso. It is made with fish, semolina, and onions in a double saucepan which in England is called a steamer. In the bottom part water is boiled; in the top part, over the holes, they put a layer of chopped onions, and over that the semolina which has been previously made into very small balls by damping it. The onions prevent the semolina from falling through the holes into the water, and the steam of the water coming through cooks the semolina and the onions. The fish are put into the water at the right moment and are boiled while the semolina is being steamed. It is all served together like bouillabaisse, the semolina answering to the bread, and extract of pomidoro is added. One would not be likely to meet with cuscuso in the houses of the well-to-do; one might get it in the albergo by insisting on it, but they would rather not provide it because, like the Discobolus in Butler's poem *A Psalm of Montreal*, it is vulgar. I have eaten it only once when I dined with my compare Michele Lombardo, a jeweller, to whose son I stood as padrino at his cresima, and I do not care to eat it again, not because it is vulgar, but because I did not find it nearly so good as bouillabaisse. The recipe for it has penetrated to Trapani from Africa as a result of the constant intercourse between Sicily and the French colony of Tunis, the fishermen of Trapani going over to the African coast not only for fish, but also for coral and for sponges.

My priest was inclined to treat the Nascita with tolerant contempt; he muttered the word "Anacronismo" several times and, since I have ascertained that Melchizedek was a contemporary of Abraham, I think he should not

have done so. I said that the anachronisms did not disturb me. I told him that in the marionette theatre in Palermo, when Cristoforo Colombo embarks from the port of Palos in Spain to discover America, a sailor, sitting on the paddle-box of the piroscafo, the steamboat, sings that Neapolitan song *Santa Lucia*. I passed over the anticipation of steam and contented myself with asking the buffo whether the song had been composed so long ago and also whether its popularity had extended from Naples into Spain. He replied that it had extended to Palermo and that his audience connected it in their minds with the sea, and as for the date of its composition he had made no inquiries, but he knew it was older than " O Sole Mio " ; we do not go to the arts for accurate archæological details.

" I will make you a paragon," said the buffo. " When I was returning from Catania I looked out of the side windows of the train and saw that the telegraph posts, as we passed by, were some distance apart. But I made friends with the guard, who took me into his van, and when I looked at them again out of the back window of the train they seemed to get closer and closer together in the distance until, far away, there appeared to be no space between them ; but I knew that there was always the same space between them. So it is with the centuries, when they are in the distant past it is difficult to distinguish in what century any particular event happened. History may settle such points, but the arts come to us from a country of the imagination whose laws of time and space are not as our laws. Art is trying to get the people to realise that a thing happened, not to teach them precisely when."

I quoted this to my priest, and he admitted its justice ; also he was so polite as to waive his objection about anacronismo, which, I then saw, had only been started in consideration of my being a professor ; not that I am really a professor but he had introduced me to our host as one, and I had accepted the distinction so as to avoid the dreary explanation that would have been forced upon me after

a disclaimer. He having waived his anacronismo so generously, it was now my turn to trump up an objection which I could deal with afterwards as circumstances might require. In making my choice I did not forget his cloth and, imitating as well as I could his tone of tolerant contempt, muttered the word "Irriverenza" several times. He saw what I meant at once and, in his reply, somewhat followed my lead.

"Where," he asked, "is the irreverence in making S. Joachim's friends arrive in tall hats and dress clothes? Why should they not read the *Giornale di Sicilia* and play cards? Where is the irreverence in making the children celebrate his daughter's birth by dancing to a piano? Why should not the Madonna have her baby-linen made on an American sewing-machine?"

As he took this line so decidedly and we had given up the anacronismo, I gave up the irreverence at once and agreed with him that there is no reason against any of these things being done if it helps the spectators. The arts are concerned more with faith than with reason, more with the spirit than with the flesh, more with truth than with fact, and we can never get away from the intention of the artist. Even in that Art of Arts which we call Life, our judgment must always be influenced by the spirit in which we believe that a thing is done. I have read somewhere that one coachman will flick flies off his horse with the intention of worrying the flies, while another (Mario, for instance) does the same thing with the intention of relieving the horse. When a modern Frenchman in the spirit of the *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* paints the guests in modern evening dress at a *Marriage in Cana of Galilee* we are offended. The Nascita is not done by such an artist; it is peculiarly a woman's subject, being a picture of home life with a birth for its occasion, and is usually made by a girl who has never heard of Bohemia. She has seen trains in the railway station and ships in the port, but probably has never herself travelled in either. Her father or her brother

has perhaps been fishing for sponges off Sfax and may have returned with stories of the wonders of Tunis, and so she may have heard of a boulevard, but she is not affected by it. She makes her Nascita as the medieval painters made their pictures, and is not seeking to attract attention or to astonish or to advertise herself or to make money. Sicilians are all artists, and the Nascita is the girl's pretext for making as close a representation as she can of the life to which she and her friends are accustomed. It is for her what the Shield of Achilles was for Homer, what the Falstaff scenes in *King Henry IV* were for Shakespeare, or what the Escape from Paris was for my buffo in Palermo.

MOUNT ERYX

CHAPTER IX

THE COMPARE

MICHELE LOMBARDO, a goldsmith of Trapani, came to me one day and said he wished me to be his compare. I at once had a vision of myself as a black man riding round a circus on a bare-backed horse and jumping through hoops. That was because, at the time, all my knowledge about a compare was derived from a conversation I had had in the house of the Greco family at Palermo. Among the photographs grouped on the wall was one of a pleasant-looking nigger in European costume. I asked who he was, and Carolina said he was an African, a compare. I asked what she meant and she said that her father had held the African's niece at its cresima. The African's name was Emanuele, but she had never known his family name. I asked whether he had a profession and she replied:

"Faceva cavallerizza."

I knew no more about cavallerizza than about a compare or a cresima. She explained the first by saying that the horse goes round and Emanuele on the horse's back performs gymnastics. That is, he used to do so, but he went to Paris, where a duchess saw him performing and, on account of his agility and his attractive physiognomy, fell in love with him. She was an Egyptian duchess and wore diamonds because she was rich. She was so rich she could do as she liked in other respects besides diamonds, and, liking to marry Emanuele, she did so and made him padrone of a grand hotel in Madrid or Vienna, I forget which, but it was a hotel of the first class, frequented by Russian princesses and American millionaires.

I told Michele about this and he assured me that his pro-

posal concealed no equestrian circus and no Egyptian duchess; to become his compare I should only have to hold his eldest son Pietro, aged seven, at his cresima. Here was an opportunity of solving the mysteries of the cresima and the compare, which Michele, who took my consent for granted, assured me would solve themselves as we proceeded. We went to the bishop's palace and were shown into his private chapel, where the sagrestano entertained us with conversation while we waited. Only once before had he ever approached an Englishman, and that was at Messina. He was a very rich Englishman and a devout son of the Church; his card with his name and address was still preserved as a ricordo in the sagrestano's house. This gentleman afterwards died in Naples under dramatic circumstances. He had stepped out one evening to take a mouthful of air, and on returning went upstairs to his room; as he put his latch-key into the door he fell down dead. By his will, which was found in the drawer of his writing-table, he bequeathed all his great wealth to the church of S. Antonio. I wanted to know whether this church is in Messina, or Naples, or England; or, it might be in America or Australia, for they sometimes speak of an Inglese Americano and of an Inglese Australiano. Once I took some of my superfluous luggage to a forwarding agent in Palermo to have it sent to England by piccola velocità. It included a figure of Buddha which I had bought in a curiosity-shop in Malta. The clerk declined to forward the image because it was a product of art, and such things may not be sent out of Italy. I said it was a product of religion; he accepted my correction and proposed to describe it in the form he was filling up as a Madonna. Again I objected, pointing out that anyone could see it was not a lady; it was Buddha. He was as puzzled as I had been over the compare. I attempted a short sketch from memory of Buddha's life and works, and was so far successful that the figure travelled to London as a Cristo Indiano.

The arrival of the bishop cut short the sagrestano's

reminiscences. There also came a woman with a baby in arms who was to receive its cresima at once, in case it might not live to reach Pietro's discreet age of seven. The bishop in magnificent vestments of brocade and gold stood with his back to the altar; the woman with the baby knelt before him to his right and the sagrestano put his hand on the baby's shoulder; Pietro knelt to the bishop's left and I put my hand on his shoulder. The ceremony, it seems, is a partial repetition of the baptism, or a performance of a part omitted from the baptism, or it is an addition to the baptism—for I did not understand so fully as Michele said I should. Unless accelerated, as in the case of the baby, it takes place when the child is old enough to have mastered the more elementary teaching of the Church but does not yet understand enough to be confirmed; and it consists in the bishop's using a great many words and gestures and making the sign of the Cross in oil on the child's forehead. Almost before the oil was on, the sagrestano wiped it off with cotton-wool and the bishop, after cleaning his thumb with half a lemon which the sagrestano had thoughtfully placed on the altar, held out his ring to be kissed by the woman and by Pietro.

In this way I became compare of Michele Lombardo and padrino of Pietro, who is my figlioccio. Being Michele's compare I am in a way related to all the family and, when I arrive at Trapani, Michele brings as many of his children as he can gather to salute me. Last time he brought five and said:

"Excuse my not bringing more."

In calling Emanuele her compare, Carolina Greco was not speaking very strictly; the relationship exists between her father and Emanuele's brother, whose child he held; but family relationships are so close in Sicily, and they speak so loosely about them, that a compare of one member of a family may be said to be compare of them all.

A compare is, however, primarily he who holds a child at its baptism, and this, no doubt, is why S. Giovanni Battista

is padrone of compari. Thus I am Compare di Battesimo of Peppino and Brancaccia at Castellinaria. It was the grandfather who actually held Ricuzzu at the baptism, but he did it as my deputy, and the spiritual relationship of compare which exists between Peppino and myself is closer than that of padrino and 'figlioccio which exists between Ricuzzu and myself.

The first step in establishing the relationship of Compare di Battesimo is usually taken at the wedding of the parents, when he who holds the cup or tazza containing the ring becomes Compare di Anello of the bride and bridegroom and also receives the privilege, or undertakes the obligation, of holding the first baby at its baptism. At Ignazio's wedding someone held the tazza with the ring and handed it to the priest at the right moment, but I did not see this done because between the happy couple and myself the lady-guests interposed a forest of hats, but I saw the tazza among the wedding presents and thought it was an ash-tray till one of them corrected me. There must have been a Compare di Anello also at the wedding of S. Joachim and S. Anna, and this person, whoever he was, ought to have appeared, and perhaps did appear, in the Nascita as padrino of the Madonna at her baptism, but I did not visit a Nascita on the Day of the Sacred Name of Maria, so I did not see the baptism.

A fourth kind of compare is the Compare di Parentela ; the name is used for those relationships by marriage which have no special name. The brother-in-law, for instance, though he may be a compare is not necessarily one, he is a cognato ; but the parents of a husband and the parents of his wife are compari to one another, and the husband's cugino, or cousin, is compare of the wife and so on.

There is yet a fifth kind—the Compare di San Giovanni. The first time I saw Turiddu Balistrieri after his escape from the earthquake at Messina (see Chapter XVII post) it seemed an occasion proper to be solemnised in some way, and we determined to become compari to one another, but

as there was no wedding and no baptism or cresima we did not know how to proceed. We consulted an expert in Catania, Peppino Fazio, who said it was an exceptional case. This did not alarm us because exceptional cases are treated tenderly in Sicily. Our expert took time to consider and in a day or two gave his opinion :—The relationship could be established by our going into the country on the 24th June, the day of S. Giovanni, and exchanging cucumbers or pots of basil. Nothing could be simpler, and accordingly on the 24th of June, 1910, Turiddu and I went into the country. He was in Catania, so he spent the day on the slopes of Etna. I was staying with friends at Bath, so I went for a walk on Lansdown. In choosing our tokens we had regard to the arrangements of the postal union ; he sent me a few dried leaves of basil and an elaborate drawing of an emerald-green plant in a gamboge pot tied round with a vermilion ribbon as a sign of goodwill and friendship. He drew the design out of his own imagination and coloured it with paints which we had bought together in Naples. I might have sent him a volume of Keats containing a *Pot of Basil* in an equally transmissible form, but as he does not read English he would not have understood ; so I sent him a young cucumber about three inches long. The ceremony was complete, and we are as good a pair of compari as any in the island.

Thus there are five kinds of compari, namely :—

1. The Compare di Battesimo.
2. The Compare di Cresima.
3. The Compare di Anello.
4. The Compare di Parentela.
5. The Compare di San Giovanni.

It may be said that there are more kinds ; the woman who washes the cap in which a baby is baptised becomes comare, but I do not know whether this is so anywhere but in Catania. And the word is sometimes used in a figurative sense as a term of endearment in addressing a partner or any

intimate friend, and sometimes with the intention of inspiring confidence in addressing a stranger in a lower station of life. When two plump gentlemen and one thin one entered the yard of the "White Hart" where Mr. Samuel Weller happened to be burnishing a pair of painted tops, the thin gentleman advanced.

"My friend," said the thin gentleman.

"You're one o' the adwice gratis order," thought Sam, "or you wouldn't be so wery fond of me all at once." But he only said, "Well, Sir."

A Sicilian Mr. Perker might have said, "Compare" instead of "Amico," and one is expected to believe that no unworthy suspicion would have crossed the mind of a Sicilian Sam Weller.

Between compari there is such complete trust and devotion that no request is ever refused; there is also the conviction, based first on intuition and afterwards on experience, that no request which ought to be refused will ever be made—a conviction which is, I suppose, an element in all friendship. A compare is received in the house as a member of the family and is looked upon as a relation closer than a brother. One can choose as compare a friend in whom one has confidence, whereas there is no choosing a brother, and cases have been known in which brothers did not agree. But any compare taking advantage of his position would be a contemptible traitor and among the sulphur-miners would provide material for a play at the Teatro Machiavelli. Talking it over with Peppino Pampalone he told me that sometimes things do go wrong, so that they say there are three relations more dangerous than enemies—the cognato (the brother-in-law) the cugino (the cousin), and the compare. And they say:

> Dagli amici mi guardi Iddio
> Chè dai nemici mi guardo io.
>
> May God protect me from my friends
> For I can protect myself from my enemies.

Peppino says: "If it is the man that would robber you in the street, this man would put his life in danger because every movement of this man you are looking. But if it is a friend then is it other; then you are depending in him that he is coming to salvare you, you are embracing him, kissing him, don't be regarding the revolver that shall be in his pocket and sometimes would kill you. If it would not be Bruto, he would not succeed to take the life of Cesare. Did you understand?"

But these are exceptional cases.

CHAPTER X

COMPARE BERTO

In 1901 I spent ten days on Mount Eryx, now usually called Monte San Giuliano, near Trapani, where I went to see the nocturnal procession of *Noah's Ark and the Universal Deluge* (*Diversions in Sicily*, Chapter X). During those days I made the acquaintance of about twenty young men of whom Alberto Augugliaro, the son of the professor of mathematics in the Ginnasio, was the chief. I have seen him nearly every year since, first as a student at Trapani, then at the University of Palermo, and again when he was at home on the Mountain for the holidays, in villeggiatura, or doing the practical work for his diploma in the chemist's shop of his uncle. When he became qualified, his uncle handed the shop over to him and he is now established in it.

One starry September evening in 1909 we were walking together in the balio (the garden on the top of the Mountain), and I asked whether, as he was now over thirty, it was not time for him to think of getting married. He confessed that negotiations were in progress. I inquired the lady's name, and he came close to me, took my arm and whispered a word in my ear. If he had shouted the

word it would have reached no other ear but mine. We were alone upon the Mountain ; the Ericini were sleeping within their walls of stone ; over their tiled and terraced roofs the stars were pacing through the night ; in front of us and to our right and left, far below, encircled by its mountainous amphitheatre, the spacious plain was cooling after the heat of yesterday ; behind us, the sea was drowsily patting the shore round the foot of Monte Cofano and along by happy Bonagía, swaying idly in and out of the harbours of Trapani and among the islands—Levanzo, Favognana, and distant Marettimo. Berto need not have whispered the word ; but it was a secret—it was the name of his lady.

Soon after Christmas he announced in the most open manner, that is to say on a post-card, that the preliminaries were over and that his engagement to Giuseppina had been made public ; I sent congratulations to them both and he replied in a letter which, omitting the formalities, runs thus in English :

I, on my part, and Giuseppina, on hers, are extremely contented because we both love you with that love which is strong and powerful enough to raise the heart and to transport us above the breatheable air ; and, as our thoughts frequently fly to you, our distant English friend, we make you a proposition, but you will understand that we lay no obligation upon you and we do not ask you to take any trouble. Here it is in two words : It is our most vivid desire that you should become our compare : that is, that you should hold the tazza containing the ring at our wedding. I repeat, it is our most vivid desire that you will accede to our request for this honour and we shall be most grateful to you if you will content us. It is for you to send your answer which we await with anxiety.

Now, I cannot be more dear to Berto than he is to me—I am not sure about the breatheable air, but he is one of the best fellows I know—so I wrote saying I was more flattered, honoured, and pleased by his request than I could express

in words. Moreover, it fell out very conveniently because the ceremony was to take place in the following April at a time when I intended to be in Sicily. Then came the difficulty about the wedding present, and whether there was any special duty for a compare to perform besides holding the ring. I remembered Ignazio's ash-tray and asked whether perhaps I ought to bring something of the kind from London. Berto replied that the tazza is a sacred object belonging to the church and is lent for the ceremony and, as I did not seem to know much about it, he kindly informed me that the customs of his country on the occasion of a wedding are as follows :

The father and the mother of the bridegroom and the father and the mother of the bride invite the relations and friends, who all offer presents of greater or less value according to the degree of relationship and friendship. The ring is chosen by the bridegroom in consultation with the bride. The compare, of his own accord, offers a present to the couple, more usually he offers it only to the bride.

All this I have told you merely as information with regard to the customs of my country ; it is not necessary for you to give any present but, if you wish to do so, do as you wish. Wedding presents are lifelong records of relationship and of friendship.

If I am to speak frankly, loyally and sincerely to you as the friend I have always been to you, I recommend you to bring some present for the bride because, as you who have travelled so much must know, in small places not to receive a present from the compare would be to provoke the remark among all who talk that the bride and bridegroom were not complimented by the compare. I tell you this because you are my dearest friend and not because I wish to be critical. Bring anything you choose and be sure that whatever may be offered by you will be accepted by my bride. For me—nothing. I have sufficient in the thought and the comfort of your friendship.

So I consulted my sister, who recommended me to visit a jeweller's shop. There is one in Regent Street where I

take my sleeve-links to be repaired when I have the misfortune to break them. She approved and I went and explained the situation to the young man, who was very kind about it and, after a few false starts, cordially advised one of a line of gold pendants much in vogue to be worn with a light chain. He had an apparently inexhaustible stock, and I became as confused and helpless as when some change is necessary in my spectacles and the oculist wants to know whether I see better with this or with that. I have no idea how long I was there, but in the end I selected a meaningless object of a design which the young man assured me was original and exclusive, and which I hoped would appear fairly unobjectionable to the recipient. After which, not being at all content to leave Berto resting solely on the thought and comfort of my friendship, I chose for him a dozen silver teaspoons. My sister, to whom I showed these articles, approved and, of her own unprompted generosity, added a piece of Irish lace as a special gift from herself to the bride, though she is unacquainted with any of the family except from my description. Thus loaded I travelled to Trapani and went up the Mountain in the public automobile, arriving on a Thursday morning early in April, 1910, the wedding being fixed for the following Saturday.

Berto met me at the Trapani gate of the town and took me to the Albergo Sicilia, where I had stayed when I was on the Mountain in 1901. Signor Bosco has died since, and his widow keeps on the inn with the help of some members of her family of six daughters and four sons. One of these sons is Peppi, a blacksmith, who plays a trombone in the municipal band. Another is Alberto, one of the chauffeurs who drive the automobile up and down the Mountain. Alberto and one of his sisters appeared as children in the procession of the *Universal Deluge*. They were sitting at the feet of *Sin* and holding one another's hands to represent the wicked population destined to destruction. Alberto is now married. His wedding took place in the morning, and at three o'clock in the afternoon three hundred guests

were entertained at dinner in the Albergo Sicilia, after which they danced till dawn and, as the wedding was in December, they must have been rather tired ; but it was an exceptional case.

In the afternoon Berto came for me and took me to the house of his bride to pay my respects. The house belongs to her ; she has two brothers and a sister all married and settled, and on Berto's marriage he will leave the house of his parents and go and live in his wife's house. We entered through a door that led through a high blank wall into a courtyard where there were flowering plants in pots, and steps leading up to the living-rooms on the first floor over a basement which is used partly as stabling and partly as storage. This is the form of most of the houses on the Mountain, and the blank wall and courtyard give them an air of seclusion. We went up the steps and were received by the bride and many of her relations, some of whom I had already met, for Giuseppina is a cousin of Berto's mother. They showed me over the house ; the rooms all led into one another and, though they were not in a row, it was rather like going over S. Joachim's house when it is being prepared for the family festa of the Nascita. It would have been still more like it if we had come in by the other front door, for the side we entered is on a street that goes up-hill and the house is at a corner with another front door in the other street at the top of the hill and level with the living-rooms. This other front door leads straight into a hall, which will be occupied by the musicians on the evening of the wedding, from this one passes to the dining-room where the servants are to dance, then to the salone where the guests are to dance.

We sat in the salone, about twenty of us in a circle, talking the usual talk, and one of the young ladies asked me whether we had compari at an English wedding. I said we had something of the kind. She inquired what I should be called if I were compare at an English wedding, and, seeing no way out of it, I modestly murmured :

"In England I should be called the Best Man."

This naturally led to a torrent of compliments, which I battled with for some moments, and finally subdued by asking to see the rest of the house. We went to the room which had been arranged as the buffet; the walls were adorned with large looking-glasses, and in the middle was a table for the cakes and sweets. The buffet is to be my bedroom next time I come to the Mountain. We passed through two other saloni and then inspected two bedrooms, one for the happy couple, the other for Berto's mother, who is to stay with them for the first few days. The presents were arranged on a table by the side of the nuptial couch, which had arrived that morning from Palermo together with the rest of the bedroom suite, very handsome, and made of Hungarian ash. The presents were rather as I have seen wedding presents in England, plenty of spoons and forks, gold brooches, rings, bracelets, some set with diamonds and some with other stones, and I was glad I was not really back in Regent Street choosing my pendant.

We went into the courtyard and into the stable where we saw Mille-lire the donkey, who is scarcely bigger than a Saint Bernard dog and only cost thirty-five lire. It was Berto who gave him the name of Mille-lire to signify that his value far exceeds his price. He has a cart to match and can take four people, but I think they must be rather small people. He shares his stable with thirty-eight chickens, old and young, and two ducks, who all come out into the courtyard to be fed in the sun. There are also three pigeons, making a total of forty-four creatures. In addition there are two cats who live in the house and two tortoises who live in the courtyard. Tortoises are found wild among the rocks in the mountains and the peasants bring them up to the town and sell them. These came from Monte Aspáracio, which is near Cofano; they cost forty centimes each, and bring good luck to the house. On Mount Eryx there is a convent of nuns of S. Teresa, to

whom flesh is forbidden, but the prohibition does not extend to tortoises, which the nuns eat with tomato sauce. When the nuns begin to feel the infirmities of age they are no longer limited to this strange meat, the prohibition is withdrawn, and they live like other old ladies, eating what they choose. I have no idea how many fourpenny tortoises would make a meal for a healthy young nun on Monte San Giuliano, where one's appetite is sharpened by the air. They occasionally add a few snails, which are also permitted ; there is a kind of snail which is found underground and is considered a luxury by others besides the nuns of S. Teresa.

After the stable and the courtyard we went to the terrace whence, over the roofs and cupolas and among the towers and belfries of the town, there is a view of the sea and the plain. Then we visited the kitchen and saw the oven for baking the bread. All the well-to-do families on the Mountain possess land on the campagna where they grow their own corn ; they take it to the mill to be weighed and ground, and fetch back the flour which is also weighed ; they know that if they leave a hundred kilograms of grain they must receive ninety-nine of flour, and in this wasted kilogram of flour lurks the true reason why the miller wears a white hat. They bake their own bread and sometimes make their own maccaroni at home. They grow their own grapes and make their own wine. They have olive trees for oil, and goats whose milk they drink, considering it lighter and more digestible than cows' milk. Berto's sister has a private goat of her own, who lives down in the country and comes up every morning, a journey of three-quarters of an hour, and she milks it herself. Thus they pass their lives very close to Mother Earth, and the seasons sensibly affect their comfort. They have little use for money except to buy coffee, fish, sugar, meat, and clothes, or the stuff of which they make their clothes, and some of them raise their own linen and wool. But they want money when there is a family festa ; Berto

told me he had spent 700 lire merely for the sweetmeats and cakes at his wedding.

All Friday and most of Saturday I spent in being presented to various members of the family and in making preparations. Berto recommended me to visit the barber on Saturday afternoon and, as a good Sicilian, I followed his advice and went to the salone of Peppino. When Samuel Butler first came to Mount Eryx in 1892 to see whether he could identify the localities with those described as Scheria and Ithaca in the *Odyssey*, he slipped in the street and put his ankle out of joint. The doctor was away, and his foot was set by Peppino, who is a barber-surgeon with a salone close to the spot where the accident happened. Accordingly Peppino is the barber I employ when I am on the Mountain. While he was attending to me I observed a change in the salone, and, on asking where the looking-glasses were, was told they had been lent to Berto to ornament the buffet of his wedding festa.

After the barber, I had my dinner, as I found there would be no opportunity to do so when once the wedding ceremonies had begun, and then I dressed. In the meantime a cloud began to collect on the Mountain and the wind began to blow.

CHAPTER XI

BERTO'S WEDDING

A SICILIAN wedding is conducted either on system *a*, when the happy couple go away for their honeymoon and the ceremony is performed in the morning, or on system *b*, when they do not go away but have a ball at home, and then the ceremony is performed in the evening. The wedding of Ignazio proceeded on system *a*, that of Berto and Giuseppina on system *b*. As for Alberto Bosco, his wedding was either a combination of *a* and *b* or an exceptional case.

Berto's brother Nicolào came to fetch me at 5.30 p.m. and took me to the house of the bride's brother in the piazza, where the bride was waiting. Her dress was of pale grey crêpe trimmed with dull silver embroidery and she wore zagara in her bonnet. Exceptional cases being excepted, it may be said that brides only wear white silk and a veil and wreath of orange blossom, as Ignazio's bride did at the religious ceremony, when the wedding is conducted on system *a*. I failed to discover any rule about a cortège of bridesmaids, if there is such a rule it is probably elastic. The other ladies wore dresses as for a dance in England in the country in the winter. The gentlemen, like the guests at the Nascita, wore evening dress. And of course we all had cloaks or over-coats.

When we were about to leave the house, Peppi Bosco, with his trombone and the rest of the municipal band, began to play, and to the strains of their music we crossed the piazza in the fog. The bride was conducted by her brother, the bridegroom came next escorting a lady cousin, I followed, as compare, with Berto's mother, and the others came after. We entered the municipio and went upstairs into a large room. The sindaco sat behind a table, the bride and bridegroom sat facing one another in two arm-chairs on the opposite side of the table and we ranged ourselves about the room.

The sindaco had often before sat at that table and received other wedding parties, nevertheless he appeared at a loss, or perhaps he disapproved of matrimony. At any rate he was not going to acquiesce in the proceedings until he had dwelt, as elderly people will, on the serious nature of the duties the young people were proposing to under take. He went so far as to put clearly before them aspects of the case which they might have overlooked and to read them legal extracts of a discouraging nature. They were unmoved, and the sindaco, still dissatisfied, asked Berto point-blank whether he really wished, under the circumstances, to take Giuseppina to be his wife. Berto replied in

the affirmative. Concealing his surprise, the sindaco turned to Giuseppina and asked her whether she wished to be married to Berto. She said she did ; and indeed it was the reason why we were all there, as the sindaco must have known if he had given the matter a thought, for the wedding had been the talk of the town since Christmas ; but the law does not regard hearsay evidence. Finding there was no help for it, he pronounced the necessary words and, no doubt with a view of disclaiming personal responsibility should he hereafter be taxed with marriage-mongering, invited them to sign the book with a pen made entirely of gold in the form of a feather, which he afterwards offered them as a wedding present with his best wishes and a paper on which his clerk had neatly engrossed the legal extracts.

We descended into the piazza now vacated by Peppi Bosco, who had been playing in it with his municipal music during the ceremony, and, forming ourselves into a procession as before, walked down the principal street of the town, and I was thinking of many things. As we passed the club I remembered how once in the winter Berto had taken me there and introduced me to all the notabilities of the place and I had wondered how the fog agreed with the billiard table. We passed the farmacia where Berto spends his time making up prescriptions and gossiping with his friends. We went on down the street and my thoughts wandered to other subjects. In the first place there was my hat, or rather Berto's uncle's hat, for, though I had remembered about the guests at the Nascita wearing evening clothes, I had forgotten that they brought their cylindrical hats, and Berto had borrowed one for me, which was so small I had to hold it on. And the wind blew and roared and shook the shutters and banged the windows and doors and smashed the glass down on to the roughly paved streets, and the dense, chilly cloud went through the cracks and penetrated into every house and damped the beds and discoloured the whitewash of the walls. And I

had Berto's mother on one arm and could not keep his uncle's hat on my head. At last I took it off and carried it under my other arm, putting on my head a cap which I happened to have in my pocket.

We came to the steep part of the street near the salone of Peppino and I thought of his looking-glasses that were temporarily adorning the future bedroom of Berto's compare, and I thought of Butler's accident and of the authoress of the *Odyssey* writing her poem up here three thousand years ago. And what are three thousand years to Time in his flight? An interval that he can clear with a flap or two of his mighty wings. No one knows how often he has flapped them since these narrow roughly paved streets began to give the town its irregular shape; no one knows anything of the prehistoric incarnations of her who has reigned here as Phœnician Astarte, as Greek Aphrodite, as Roman Venus, and who now reigns here as Italian Maria. We were adding one more to the processions that during unnumbered ages have passed along the streets of Mount Eryx worshipping the Mystery of Birth.

We turned down by the Palazzo Platamone and at last reached the Matrice. The floor was hidden by the people standing on it and the ceiling by thousands of wax candles hanging from it. The organ was playing antiphonally with Peppi Bosco, who had preceded us with his trombone and his municipal music. We went into the sagrestia and I did not at first recognise the Arciprete Messina who received us, for I had not previously seen him in his vestments, but he knew me. We had met in the street when he was wearing his ordinary clothes the day before and I had told him I had his photograph taken by Butler, who wanted his face because it is particularly round, like that of so many of the Ericini, and Butler used to say they are descended from the Cyclopes who formerly lived here—Cyclopes means circle-faced, not one-eyed.

After signing the register we left the sagrestia, pushed our way through the people, and stood outside the altar-

rails in a circle, the arciprete, Berto, Giuseppina, myself and another priest. I held an old silver tazza, on which the ring was placed. The music was tremendous and had to be made to play piano. The arciprete read the words and, at the proper moment, I handed the tazza, from which he took the ring and gave it to the bridegroom, who placed it upon the bride's finger. And the Madonna di Custonaci sat over the altar with the Child at her breast smiling down upon our little circle and giving her blessing to Berto and Giuseppina who, with the sanction of their relations and friends, were taking the first step on the path that leads to motherhood.

We were not in the church ten minutes, and the music became forte again as our procession passed out into the fog. We went to the bride's house and entered by the door that leads into the courtyard which was occupied by Peppi Bosco, who had again preceded us with his trombone and municipal music. The bride retired and, after a few moments, reappeared among the guests, escorted by Berto and accompanied by someone bearing a large tea-tray piled up with sugared almonds, which she ladled to us in handfuls with a silver coffee-cup. On whatever system a Sicilian wedding is conducted it would be incomplete without sugared almonds, and they are sent in boxes to all friends who are unable to attend. Several boxes were given to me for my near relations who, by virtue of my having become compare of Berto and Giuseppina, are now in a manner related to them. And the bride also gave me for my sister a special gift of a handkerchief embroidered by someone in the neighbourhood.

After the almonds, the music began in the front hall and we danced. There were waltzes, polkas and contraddanze, also games involving dances. I did not try to dance the waltzes or the polkas, they were quite different from those I used to be taught; Berto said they were dancing the ballo figurato. Nor did I dance the tarantella, which I never was taught in any form, but I saw it danced by

Berto's mother and a brother of the bride. I danced in three contraddanze, first with Berto's mother, then with his bride, then with his sister. One of the dancers called out in French what we were to do, and the mistakes we made added to the amusement. Frequently there was a promenade, the partners walking arm-in-arm round the room, which gave time to recover ourselves when we had got into any great confusion. Sometimes he who directs the contraddanza is so fertile in invention that he can make it last two hours. I do not think any that I danced lasted above half an hour, and they always ended by our promenading away to the buffet, which was under the joyous direction of Berto's father. Here we ate sweetmeats and cakes and drank rosolio, which is any kind of light liqueur.

Berto's brother Nicolào took me away at 3 a.m., and I wanted someone to show me the road because the cloud was still on the Mountain, and they do not keep the streets lighted all night. But the rest danced for another hour and then departed, leaving Berto's mother to attend to the bride and to stay in the house.

Next day at noon we all called to inquire and I remained to dinner at two. While we were at table we heard the drum beating a Saracen rhythm and went to the window. It was the festa of S. Francesco da Paola ; he was coming out of his church and going up to the balio on the top of the Mountain. The fog had cleared away, leaving a few light clouds whose shadows chased one another across the campagna and out to sea, where they played with the islands that were swimming in it, each separate and distinct in the brightness like those on a China plate. S. Francesco turned his back to the islands ; he had not come out to bless the sea. Nor had he come to bless Cofano ; he knew it was beyond his power to make that rocky wilderness to blossom as a rose. The translucent mountains stood back in a rugged amphitheatre before him, reverently saluting the throne of Venus ; he acknowledged their salute, but he did not bless the barren mountains ; he

remembered the words of his Master: To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.

Good old San Cicciu da Paola turned his eyes away from the mountains and looked down upon the exuberance of the campagna. Every patch was a mother's breast suckling the young bread and wine and oil, making the little figs to swell on their branches and the big blobby oranges to grow bigger and blobbier among their leaves. The salad was pushing, pushing up through the soil; peaches, apples, pears, medlars and plums were forming inside their faint pink and snowy blooms; there were almonds and blossoming pomegranates, asparagus and tomatoes, artichokes in disorderly tufts and beans combed into tidy rows. In the hollow places, like marshy pools reflecting the sky, lay beds of pale blue flax to be woven into wedding sheets for Mount Eryx.

San Cicciu looked upon it and saw that it was good, and he blessed all that fertility. He was doing for the campagna what the Cyclopean arciprete had asked the Madonna to do for Berto and Giuseppina.

TRABONELLA

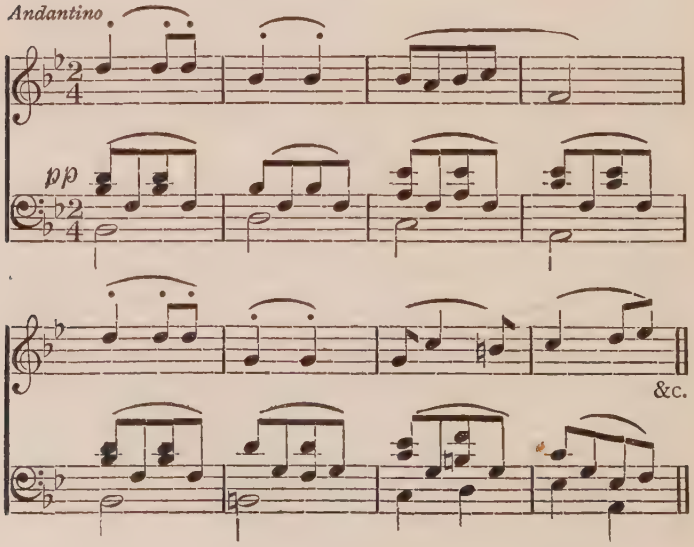
CHAPTER XII

SULPHUR

CALTANISSETTA is a busy town of some 45,000 inhabitants near the middle of the island and about 2000 feet above the sea. It depends for its prosperity on almonds, grapes, olives and sulphur, especially the last, for there is much sulphur in the pores of the rock. I have several friends there of whom one, Beppe (Giuseppe) Catena, is an engineer with an interest in Trabonella, the largest sulphur mine in the neighbourhood, and another, Gigino (Luigi) Cordova, is an advocate. Sometimes Beppe is in the town and sometimes Gigino and I go to Trabonella and find him there. It is an hour's drive along a road that winds among rolling hills. Through the depressions between the near hills other hills appear, and through their depressions higher hills, and beyond these are higher hills again until the view is bounded by the Monti delle Madonie where the snow lingers until May. It must have been some such country as this that was in the mind of him who first spoke of the sea running mountains high.

I do not know whether it is more beautiful in spring or in autumn. I know that in spring the grass under the orange trees is spotted with purple flowers, and that crimson vetch incarnadines the hills, as though Lady Macbeth had dipped her little hand into their multitudinous green; the hedges bloom with rosemary and scarlet geranium, the banks with sweet pea and brilliant mesembryanthemum, and the rough places are full of asphodel; there are a few eucalyptus trees and now and then a solemn row of cypresses; we may pass a hut of grey thatch and perhaps a few horses or a sprinkling of tethered goats; sometimes we see a herd of bullocks tended by a boy who

has come out this morning in black sheep-skin leggings up to his hips, and I think he learnt his song from happy nightingales that set the April moonlight to music.

But in autumn the prospect is as fair. The harvest is over; the earth, bronzed by the summer heat, is resting after her labour and nature is making variations in the ochres and umbers that in spring were half hidden, huddled together in the steep places where nothing will flourish; the stubble shows in lines of pale yellow on the brown earth among patches of almost colourless green and other patches black with burning which change the value of the olives, pistachios, carubas and aloes; here and there is a shrivelled thistle, here and there a lone pine; sometimes we see a string of mules winding in and out on its way home, losing and finding itself among the undulations like a little fleet of fishing boats that rise and fall with the swell, and I think Schubert must have passed this way when he felt stirring within him the mellow loveliness of the second Entr'acte to *Rosamunde:*

We need not choose one or the other, we need only wait to have both ; for spring is the modulation to the dominant, the awakening, the going out in search of adventure, while autumn is the return to the tonic, the coming home in search of repose, the falling asleep ; the first leads to the second as naturally as youth leads to age.

Last time Gigino and I went to Trabonella it was spring, and we took with us his young brother Michelino, aged thirteen, who had never been there before. We arrived in the afternoon and found Beppe, who took us round, and we showed Michelino the works. Empty trucks were gliding down a sloping railway into the mine, while others were gliding up filled with the harvest of the deep. We saw the broken pieces of rock being put into great furnaces and we watched the treacly sulphur that was melted out of the pores and came oozing through a tap into a mould. It is then purified and made into shapes like candles, and I thought of Kentish giants handling such bars of sulphur to fumigate the hops in the glow of an oast-house fire. We introduced Michelino to the overseers, directors and managers and to the doctor. We returned to the hut where Beppe lives, and dined out of doors in the yard behind. It all seemed to me very healthy and like the accounts one reads and the illustrations one sees of life in a new country, with the advantage that Caltanissetta is only about eight kilometres away. But Beppe objected that the nearness of Caltanissetta was no advantage because it induces a feeling of " Well, it doesn't matter ; I can always go to town for that," and so they put up with much that they might remedy if they were really beyond the reach of civilisation. Consequently he was not able to treat us as we deserved. We replied that we were glad it was so, because he was treating us much better.

After dinner we joined the other managers and directors in a room of a larger building ; a mandoline and guitar were brought and some of them played. Presently Michelino sang. He surprised me by the beauty and power of his young voice and by his management of it, also by his

musical intelligence and by his complete self-possession. He sang the tenor songs of many operas and other popular melodies, especially I remember his singing the *Stornelli Montagnoli*, which is so beautiful that the buffo said it would save itself in the Escape from Paris. To all this the guitar-player vamped an accompaniment which Michelino relentlessly silenced by a gesture when it became unbearable. It was absurd to see him lording it over the company, nearly a dozen of us and the youngest nearly old enough to be his father. When it was time to retire, beds were found for the visitors and I passed a comfortable night in Beppe's hut.

Next day we were taken into the mine to see what goes on underneath the freedom of the rolling hills. We dived down in a lift, ever so deep into the darkness, and probably it was dangerous, but when I go down lifts and see over mines, as when I wander among the tottering ruins of Messina, I have learnt to hope that the accident will be some other day. We saw nearly naked men, monsters of the abyss, crouching in cavernous places, pick-axing the sulphurous rock in the dim light of their miner's lamps, while others were bringing broken pieces along the low, dark galleries and sending them up in the trucks to the light. And the workers were groaning and moaning as they worked. Day after day, always the same monotonous groaning and moaning, always the same monotonous pick-axing the rock in the dim light, always the same monotonous sending up the broken pieces. It was very hot in some places and very cold in others, and I was glad to follow the broken pieces up and return to the fresh air and the sunshine.

Beppe told me that Trabonella is the largest sulphur mine in Europe, that the total length of its galleries is thirty kilometres, which is about as far as from the Albert Hall to Windsor Castle. They employ a thousand miners, and the boys begin work outside the mine at twelve and inside at fifteen. There has been an alteration in the law; formerly

they began younger and were deprived of the little education for which they now have time, and the hard work so deformed their tender bodies that they could not pass the army test. This is their modulation to the dominant, their awakening to life. It is not a pleasing prospect ; nor is the early autumn of ill-health and decrepitude to which it naturally leads any more pleasing. They pass their lives in the dark, morally and physically, and frequently a sudden fall of rock cripples, if it does not destroy, the victim ; then there are broken pieces of a different kind to be taken along the low dark galleries and brought up to the light.

I was in Caltanissetta one Saturday evening and saw the funeral of two who had been killed in this way that morning. First came a band playing a funeral march, that was all the more melancholy because the instruments were distressingly discordant, as though in their grief the men had not had time to tune them. Then came comrades carrying candles, and comrades bearing first one coffin, then the second, plain wooden coffins with no pall. Others carried chairs on which the coffins were rested when the bearers were changed. There were no priests. But there were priests the next day for the wedding of another comrade. Beppe told me that about 90 per cent of their funerals are conducted without priests and about 90 per cent of their weddings are conducted with priests.

They told me of one sulphur-miner who, having seen enough funerals, left the mine and went to Palermo in search of work. He was taken on by a contractor who was levelling a piece of high ground, on which blocks of dwellings have since been erected behind the Teatro Massimo, and began work at six o'clock one morning. Five minutes later he was killed and buried by a fall of earth.

In the mine they are in constant fear of this death. They work very hard and the air is bad ; they come up to sleep, to eat and to gamble. The air they sleep in cannot be much better than that in the mine, for they are laid out in close huts on shelves, like rolls of stuff in a draper's shop. They

hardly know the difference between youth and age, between spring and autumn. They scarcely get a glimpse of the landscape except on Saturdays and Sundays, and then they are intent upon something else. After their week of labour they feel the necessity of expansion ; they receive their wages and go to Caltanissetta ; those who are married sleep with their wives, while those who are unmarried sleep quite alone as the soldiers did after the death and burial of l'Invincible Monsieur d'Malbrough. They become free human beings for two days. I have seen the piazza full of them on Sunday morning—so full that I thought it would have been easier to walk across it, treading on their heads, than to push through the crowd. Unfortunately their notion of the life of a free human being does not stop at loafing about in the piazza. They also go to the wine shops, where they offer one another the means of forgetting that their oases of rest lie in a desert of drudgery, and sometimes this becomes the means of their forgetting everything else as well.

Gigino has written a paper upon the connection between alcoholism and crime. He told me that the consumption of alcohol in Sicily is less than in northern countries, but that there is more crime. I naturally inquired whether it would not tend to lessen the crime if the Sicilians would drink rather more. He replied that, as so often happens at the beginning of any inquiry, there are other considerations and I must not be in a hurry. As for the sulphur-miners, they need not drink more, but if they would spread fairly over the week the amount they consume during Saturday and Sunday, then, although they would risk incurring the consequences of chronic alcoholism, they would avoid those of acute alcoholism. For the need of expansion causes them to drink more than they can stand all at once, then they quarrel and commit murders. So that many of those who begin life as boys in the mine, and week after week escape the falling rocks, live to be killed in a drunken brawl, and one does not know which prospect is the more ugly.

I asked whether their condition could not be improved by raising their wages. They asked whether I wished to dislocate the commerce of the world by raising the price of sulphur. I had no such desire and, indeed, did not know, till they told me, that sulphur enters into so many manufactures as it does. Here again in seeking to ameliorate conditions with which one is imperfectly familiar one must not be in a hurry. It is not altogether a question of raising their wages, they receive from four and a half to five francs a day, which, for five days, amounts to between twenty-two francs fifty and twenty-five francs a week; there are many labourers who receive less and do more with it. Of course, they would like more wages—everyone would like more wages—but what the sulphur-miners really want is the intelligence to use wisely what they have and also some change, if it were possible, in the conditions under which their work is done. Beppe assured me that the question is not being overlooked, but it has roots which extend further and are more complicated than the galleries in the mine—roots which are tangled with the roots of other questions affecting other interests, and these again affect others. So I bowed before the other considerations and hoped that with the changes that are continually taking place in Sicily something may soon be done for the sulphur-miners, trusting that in the meantime we are not paying too dearly for the advantage of getting our sulphur so cheap.

CHAPTER XIII

OMERTÀ AND THE MAFIA

When the drunken sulphur-miners quarrel and kill one another on Saturdays and Sundays, the murderers are seldom brought to justice because of Omertà; a word which is said to be derived from uomo and to signify manliness in the sense of power of endurance, the power, for

example, of keeping silence even under torture ; hence it comes to be used for an exaggeration of that natural sense of honour, that Noblesse Oblige or Decency Forbids, which makes an English schoolboy scorn to become a sneak. It may be false and foolish, it may be noble and chivalrous, whatever it is, they say, it has such a firm growth among them because the history of Sicily is the history of an island which has for centuries been misgoverned by foreigners, and the people have lost any faith they may ever have had in professional justice. If one were to be involved with a Sicilian in committing a crime, one might be perfectly certain that he would never turn King's evidence, he would say, " Io son uomo, io non parlo " (" I am a man, I know how to hold my tongue ") and he would rather die than betray an accomplice who is his friend and probably his compare. Nor need the criminal fear that the victim or anyone in the secret whether accomplice or not, will blab. A man with a wound on his face, made obviously by a knife, will swear to the police that in drawing a cork he fell and cut himself with the bottle. He does not intend his assailant to go unpunished, but he will not have the police interfering if he can prevent it ; he means to look after his own affairs himself. If a murder has been committed a crowd will collect round the murdered man—a crowd that includes the police and also the murderer—but no one has any idea who committed the crime, not even those who saw it done, and not even the dying man, who may carry his assumption of ignorance so far as to call his murderer to his side, embrace him affectionately and give him a Judas-kiss which bears a double meaning ; for the police and the general public it is evidence that there can have been no ill-feeling between the two, while for the friends of the murdered man it confirms their suspicions as to the one on whom the vendetta is to be executed. So many have told me this that I cannot help thinking that, if it really is done as often as they say, it must by now have lost some of its power of deceiving the police. Probably it was done on

some occasion which took the public fancy, and they keep on repeating it because it makes a dramatic close.

Giovanni Grasso has a play called *Omertà: La Legge del Silenzio.* Don Andrea has been murdered by or at the instigation of Don Totò (Salvatore), who is an overbearing bully, nevertheless Saru (Rosario) has been sent to prison for the crime and, during his absence, his girl has married Don Totò. The play opens with the return from prison of Saru, acted by Giovanni. He comes to the house of his mother, with whom Don Totò and his wife are living. The length of the play is provided by the disappointments attending his return: his setting up for himself and painting paladins on Sicilian carts; a scene of passionate tenderness with his mother, during which he convinces her of his innocence, but refuses to reveal the name of the murderer which he has learnt in prison; a beautiful interview with Pasqualino, his young brother, who shows he is the right sort of boy by declaring of his own accord that he hates Don Totò; a magnificent interrupted quarrel with Don Totò, and scenes with the police and with the priest to whom Saru refuses to give any information about the murder. Towards the end Saru staggers in wounded. They all try to make him tell the name of his murderer, but he will not. Finally, he is left alone with Pasqualino to whom he gives his revolver with these dying words:

"For Don Totò, when you shall be eighteen."

Pasqualino understands, kisses the pistol and accepts the obligation, saying:

"I will see to it."

The others return and ask Pasqualino whether Saru told him anything before he died, and Pasqualino, concealing the pistol in his bosom as the Spartan boy concealed the fox, bravely answers:

"Nothing."

One may object to the play on the ground that it breaks off instead of coming to a conclusion—one is left wishing to see Pasqualino, grown up and acted by Giovanni, executing

the vendetta—but it is a good play and shows what is meant by omertà. The dramatic critic of the *Times* (2 March, 1910), on the morning after Giovanni produced it in London, opened his notice of it thus: "Omertà must make things very difficult for the Sicilian police." This is precisely what they intend.

Without omertà the mafia would hardly flourish, and the mafia is not so easy to understand. I suppose the reason why Sicilians explain it badly is that they understand it too well. The inquiring outsider cannot see the trees for the wood, and the explaining insider cannot see the wood for the trees. They labour to make clear things with which I am familiar, and take for granted things which are strange to me, treating me rather as my father treated the judges before whom he was arguing some legal point. Their lordships interrupted him:

"Yes, Mr. Jones, you say this is so and that is so, but you do not produce any authority in support of your statements."

"Authority, my lord?" exclaimed my father, as though perhaps he might have forgotten something: then, leaning over the desk, he said, in a stage whisper: "Usher, bring me *Blackstone*—or some other elementary work."

Thus we do not make much progress, but by degrees one picks up a few ideas about it.

My friend Peppino Fazio, of Catania, allowed me to copy and translate part of an article he wrote in a newspaper. He is speaking of Palermo as long ago as 1780:

The Albergheria was the quarter that harboured those men who were most ready with their hands and most quarrelsome; they were expert also in using their knives, with which they fenced by rule and according to art; they obeyed a certain code of chivalry of their own, not permitting the weak or the unarmed to be bullied, treating as criminals those who used fraud and treachery, and not brooking the intervention of the police. They were men whom an exaggerated sentiment of honour and of individual courage had decoyed from the path

of social conventions, but in whom there was a fundamental notion of right conduct and a generosity at times magnanimous. They held each other in great mutual respect, free from any element of servility or cowardice, not recognising grades, nor conferring any right to command—a respect that was the more profound according as its object was the more distinguished for acts of valour and grandeur of soul. It was the tacit homage that one pays to heroes, poets, artists and to every kind of genius.

These men, slowly degenerating, have produced the mafia, which is associated with bullying, blackmailing and crime. The word mafia has been applied in this bad sense only in more recent times, as we are assured by those who have studied the subject. The ancestors of the mafiosi used to call themselves Cristiani—that is Men in the sense of men of courage and silence.

The Cristiano carried in one pocket his rosary and in the other his knife. Outside his own class he recognised the higher social distinctions and, while preserving his own self-respect and never stooping to obsequiousness, felt for the galantuomini (that is for the townspeople) and for the signori (that is for the patricians) a real submission which he displayed both in acts and words by protecting their persons and their reputations; so that no thief or evil-liver dared to commit any crime against one who was known to be protected by a Cristiano.

One recognises about this something of the chivalry of Robin Hood and of more modern highwaymen. The conditions of life in the albergheria are not identical with those of life in the open country, either in England or in Sicily, nor with those of life in the orange-groves of the Conca d'Oro round about Palermo. Both in the Conca d'Oro and in the open fields the guardians employed to protect the crops are all mafiosi and are able to prevent the employment of any who are not. The conditions in a sulphur-mine again are different. Confusion arises unless one knows which conditions are present to the mind of him who is trying to explain the mafia. Besides which, the words mafia and mafioso are still often used in a good sense.

There was something mafioso about Michelino when he was singing to us at the mine, keeping us all in order and silencing the guitar with a wave of his hand. There is something of it in a girl who is not ashamed of her beauty and does not blush to be admired. It was the mafiosità of Guido Santo, the mule, at Castellinaria, that sunny morning when he trotted up and down in his new harness before taking us to the shore, which put it into our heads to make it also his festa. There is something of it in the attitude of King Henry VIII, with his hat on one side and his arm a-kimbo, as he appears in a full-length portrait by Holbein. There was a good deal of it in the conduct of Giovanni in his Teatro Machiavelli on one occasion when a lady music-hall singer failed to please ; the public hissed her and made such an uproar that she could not proceed. Giovanni was, or pretended to be, furious. He behaved to his audience as Nino Bixio behaved to his men on the Sicilian expedition. He came on and abused them with gesticulation and language ; he swore and stormed at them ; he appealed to their sense of chivalry ; he threatened to come down among them and teach them manners ; he declared that they should hear her. He made the piano-man play ; he went and fetched the lady ; he stood by her side, frowning, with his arms folded, ready to break out, the personification of angry determination and suppressed energy. The people acquiesced and listened. When the singer had finished, they applauded ; and they were applauding not only her, but also Giovanni because he had dominated them. It is a small theatre and their numbers may have been four or five hundred—it would depend upon the programme and the kind of evening it was—but if it had been the Teatro Bellini he would have subdued them just as well, unless there had been present someone to resist him with a stronger personality, and his experience had taught him that the chances were against that.

An imposing personality is a useless possession unless there are others willing to be imposed upon, and it is this

willingness to be dominated quite as much as the love of dominating that makes the mafia possible. If I may "quote from memory":

> Surely the pleasure is as great
> Of being beaten as to beat.

Possibly the Sicilian charm contains among its many ingredients a trace of this love of being dominated which, in England, we associate more particularly with women, spaniels and walnut trees; and if it were not so, history might contain less about the misgovernment of the island by foreigners.

The mafia is not like the Neapolitan Camorra, it is not an organised society such as one reads about in books for boys, nor is it a recognised trade union with a president, secretary officers and so on. It is rather an esprit de corps, and no more a secret society than omertà is a secret society; nevertheless, they speak of the mafia as being more highly organised in some districts than in others, and there are secret societies whose members are mafiosi, so that for a foreigner to speak of the mafia as a secret society would appear to be an excusable error.

Among every collection of men, and even in a herd of bullocks, one is always the acknowledged leader, and in a sulphur-mine it naturally happens that one man has a more dominating personality, more prepotenza, than any of the others; this capo-mafioso takes the lead and is king. When, as often happens, he is a man with a respect for law and order, willing to be useful to the managers, the mafia can and does supplement in an amateur fashion the deficiencies of professional justice. If Giovanni Grasso were really a worker in a sulphur-mine, as he sometimes appears to be on the stage, he would certainly take the lead, and no one who knows him will believe that he could ever be capable of a bad action. But few men can safely be trusted with absolute power. Sometimes this capo-mafioso is a villain who glories in a record of crime, a brow-beating bully who will

stick at nothing. Here is a situation for a melodrama—the Wicked Despot. He does as he chooses with those around him, who fear lest he should treat them as Don Totò treated Don Andrea before the opening of *Omertà*, and as he treats Saru in the course of the play ; and they not only fear, they also admire an unscrupulousness of which they feel themselves to be incapable. They refer their disputes to him and execute his orders. They do not pay him money for adjudicating between them, it is enough for him to have the satisfaction of being asked to arbitrate and, by giving his decision and seeing that it is carried out, he consolidates his power. But he exacts from them a percentage of their winnings at cards as tribute, and they pay it willingly so as to keep on good terms with him. Of course, under the throne of any of these tyrants, among those who have sufficient daring, conspiracies are continually surging and, sooner or later, whether he is a good or a bad man, he has to give way to a stronger—perhaps a fresh arrival, who takes the public fancy. Sometimes there are two with apparently an equal power of dominating ; they agree not to quarrel openly, but, between themselves, each is on the look-out for an opportunity to annihilate the other's influence.

One Saturday, in the street at Caltanissetta, Beppe showed me marks of bullets on the wall. He said that only a week before there had been a row among a score of men with revolvers about some question of precedence among the mafiosi in a neighbouring mine arising out of the terms proposed for ending a strike. One of the men was killed and several were wounded, but the question of precedence could not be settled that day because the survivors were all put into prison.

According to the plays, the prisons are to the mafiosi what the ganglia are to the nerves, and give the prisoners an opportunity for talking matters over, thus providing an effective means of continuing the plot of the drama. And though the criminals feel secure in the knowledge that

omertà will prevent their confederates from giving information, yet the police, of course, know who is who all the time, just as the police in London know who are the criminals; the law, however, is jealous of the rights of the people and does not move on suspicion. And too much of the modern police methods would not combine well with the requirements of melodrama.

Beppe assured me that in his mine the mafiosi are mostly good fellows and do not do any harm, except among themselves when they quarrel, get drunk and murder one another. He admits that the making use of them in the management of the men is like playing with fire, but he agrees with all who have gone into the matter that a stranger falling among them, wherever he might meet them, would be treated with the most extreme respect and courtesy. This is not because they are afraid of giving themselves away, distrusting the stranger's omertà, it is because they have a real self-respect and wish to pass in the eyes of the world for men of good position. The presence of a stranger among them is a challenge to their chivalry and to their oriental sense of hospitality.

Anyone wishing to study the mafia from books might begin with *La Mafia e I Mafiosi*, by Antonio Cutrera, Delegato di Pubblica Sicurezza (Palermo. Alberto Reber, 1900), and continue with *La Mala Vita di Palermo* (*I Ricottari*), by the same author. If he will also read all the numerous books by other authors cited in the notes to these two works he ought to gain a fair knowledge of the subject.

CHAPTER XIV

MALA VITA

SICILIANS sometimes claim that much of what has been stated in the foregoing chapter is now out of date, and that, with the advance of civilisation, the power of the mafia

and the respect for omertà are giving way to confidence in the police. And they go on to regret that Giovanni Grasso should have so much success with his plays in foreign countries, because they contain a great deal of mafia and mala vita which he presents with so much realism that foreigners are encouraged in the idea that all Sicilians are for ever sleeplessly going about with knives in their belts seeking to execute vendettas. But most theatre-goers know by this time that melodramas are not made up of the events of ordinary life. A man does not discover every day that he has been deceived by his wife or that his sister has been betrayed by his compare ; when he does make such a discovery he may be pardoned if he loses his self-control. Anyhow, the sleepless vendetta notion is so ludicrously contrary to the fact that Sicily can afford to take the risk. One might as well treat seriously the complaint against the marionettes, that the swaggering talk of Orlando and Rinaldo encourages the boys to behave in real life as though every fancied insult must be wiped out with blood. The boys certainly do fight—they can be seen fighting in the fish-market, one armed with a basket for his shield and another with a stick for his sword, his Durlindana. But boys fight, even in England, with no marionettes to inflame their imaginations, and sometimes they cut one another ; still, no one would take too seriously the exclamation of that schoolmaster who, on being called to deal with some such incident, hurried from his study muttering :

" Knives, knives—dangerous weapons ; would to heaven they had never been invented ! "

What was he going to do at dinner-time ? And if the marionettes are to be abolished, what is the Sicilian boy to do when it is time for him to sit down to his evening meal of romance ? It is even possible that if he were starved of his marionettes he would more frequently substitute the dangerous weapon for the stick.

We see Sicilian life only in bits at a time and any bit we see may turn out on investigation to be only a bit of act-

ing ; and, whether real life or acting, we see it through the veil of romance which is held in front of it by their language and by their gestures, which cause their acting to appear more real—that is, which help it to be more deceptive. By their language I do not mean merely their words and their grammar—we also have a grammar, and our dictionary contains words as many and as expressive as theirs—the romance is rather in their attitude of mind and the consequent use they make of their words. I have read with disgust in an English newspaper an account of a squalid Pentonville murder which, as described in a contemporary Italian journal, appeared worthy to be set to music by Puccini. We are like the audience in Giovanni's theatre—dominated by the imposing romance of the language, and we prefer to be so dominated. Or we are like the audience in the teatrino at Palermo, when the buffo performs a miracle ; as soon as we get behind " la mala vita " and see it as " the life of the criminal classes " we have caught a glimpse of how the illusion is worked.

By their gestures I mean something about which in England, in France and even in Northern Italy, nothing is known. It is true that we Northerners can and do communicate with one another in gesture, but in England we mostly omit gesture and use speech, while in France and Northern Italy the gesture is only slight. A Sicilian sometimes omits words, but if he omits gestures it is only by exercising great self-control. When he is talking naturally, every muscle of his body is at work helping him to express his meaning. It is as though he had not yet learnt to trust speech, everything must be acted too, as half-educated people have not yet learnt to trust the written word and if they read must read aloud. At a cinematograph show, when a letter or telegram or the title of the piece is shown on the screen, a murmur goes round the hall ; it is the people reading the writing out loud to assure themselves of its meaning. So the talking Sicilian is telling everything twice, once with his voice and once with his gestures and

there is so much oil in his backbone that there is nothing creaky, awkward or grudging in his movements; the gestures are made with an exuberance, an intensity and a natural unconscious beauty which seem to lift the matter above the plane of ordinary life. So habitual is this gesticulation that it is often useless. I have been behind the scenes in a marionette theatre, watching the man declaiming for the figures. His energy was tremendous, no wonder he drank out of a black bottle from time to time. I knew he was hidden from the audience and thought he might be suggesting movements for the marionettes to the man who was manipulating them, but that man could not see him either and was improvising the movements of the figures unaided.

The gesticulating Sicilian, however, is not more deeply moved by what he is describing than the phlegmatic Englishman is when he is quietly telling something. I have sometimes ventured to laugh at the Sicilian for his unnecessary vehemence, and he has stopped in the middle of it all and joined in the laughter. It would be extremely interesting to see Giovanni Grasso in the part of an English gentleman, a Wyndham or a Hawtrey part. I believe he would succeed because I believe he would succeed in anything he set his mind to do, but for him to reproduce an Englishman's tranquillity would be as much of an effort as it would be for an English actor to reproduce a Sicilian's mobility.

Their power of acting is not confined to those who are actors by profession; the love of improvising little scenes in daily life may be said to be characteristic of them. To suppose that they do this from a love of lying would be to simplify unduly; they have the artist's power of seeing a thing in two senses at once, and they assume that they will not be misunderstood, at all events, they are not going to give it all away by explaining, and if the stranger is taken in—well, as a rule, it does not very much signify. Just as omertà makes things difficult for the Sicilian police, so this

love of acting makes things difficult for the foreign traveller. There is a story in the form of a dialogue between a foreigner in Palermo inquiring of a native about a tree that was clipped into a fantastic shape. It can hardly be given in English because it turns on the double meaning of "naturale," which means sometimes "natural" and sometimes "naturally," but if it be added that "scusi" = "excuse me"; "quest' albero" = "this tree"; "è" = "is"; "o" = "or," any reader will be able to understand it:

FOREIGNER: Scusi, Signore; quest' albero è artificiale o naturale?

PALERMITAN: Artificiale.

FOR: Oh, artificiale?

PAL: Naturale.

FOR: È naturale?

PAL: Artificiale.

FOR: (*getting irritated*): Scusi, Signore; quest' albero è artificiale o naturale?

PAL: Artificiale, naturale.

And then the foreigner goes home and writes a book about his travels, saying that the natives are so stupid they do not even know whether their trees are clipped into odd shapes by nature or art. But the apparently grave and courteous Palermitan knew what he was doing all the time and was enjoying it as a child enjoys committing a harmless piece of mischief.

If one were to pierce through it and understand them as they may be supposed to understand themselves, one would not necessarily be in a position to give an opinion about the mafia, for, besides those who speak of the growing confidence in the police, there are others who assert that the improvement, if any, is slight and only on the surface, and that the spirit of the mafia is not confined to the mala vita, but extends to the upper classes and influences even the administration of justice and the elections. When the natives differ on such a point, a mere foreigner can hardly

decide ; but I have more frequently heard the opinion expressed in favour of improvement. Certainly, in the Teatro Machiavelli, when murderers are taken by the police it is often done now with the approval of the audience, which they tell me would not have been the case some years back.

Before writing about the mala vita one ought at least to have seen a man murdered in the street. I have never seen this, nor have I ever even seen the body of a murdered man lying in the street. All that I know about the mala vita in Sicily has been gathered from conversation, books and plays. Lest it should be thought that in thus disclaiming practical knowledge of the subject I am inspired by omertà —as a traveller may shut his eyes to unpleasant incidents out of regard for his hosts—I will here collect together all the occasions when I have thought myself to be in the immediate neighbourhood of the mala vita.

At Castellinaria the barber who keeps the shop opposite the Albergo della Madonna—the shop in which Alfio Mascalucia was assistant—always seemed to me to be a man one would readily trust with all one's possessions. He must be now over forty, married and with a family. Peppino told me the other day that in his youth, meaning between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six, this barber had been a notorious ricottaro and had often been in prison for crimes of various kinds. When I heard this, his extremely courteous manner reminded me of the Robin Hood side of the Cristiani, and of the oriental hospitality of the mafiosi towards strangers. I asked Peppino whether I ought to discontinue my custom. He said not unless I was dissatisfied with him as a barber. Then I realised that I must have forgotten where I was for the moment.

Carmelo and his brother Rosario at Castellinaria have both been in prison for attempting to murder, but they can neither of them be said ever to have belonged to the class of habitual criminals.

In the Teatro Machiavelli Peppino Fazio gave me as a

ricordo one of the knives used by the mafiosi. The blade doubles on the handle, so that when open it is about twice as long as when shut; some are as long as twenty-four inches when open, mine is only eighteen. Being intended for the theatre, it has never been sharpened or pointed but, except for this it is a real mala vita knife. They told me there would be nothing to fear so long as I continued the life of blameless respectability which had no doubt become habitual to me—or some nonsense of that kind—but that if I should happen to be caught by the police in doubtful surroundings and searched, even this knife, in spite of its arrested adolescence, might get me into trouble.

"So you had better be careful," said one of them; "but if you do get put into prison, let us know and you shall be treated as well as any ricottaro. I will bring you a good dinner every day."

"Yes," said another, "and I will bring you cigarettes."

"And I," said a third, "will fetch your linen and bring it back to you nicely washed and ironed."

Whenever I show my knife to any of my English friends, for I am happy to say I got it safely home, they always exclaim that it is an entirely prosaic object. And so it is. It is as unromantic as an escape of gas.

Several times I have been in a theatre when the performance has been interrupted by a disturbance among the audience, but I have never seen it develop into a serious row.

Once in Palermo my bedroom looked over a small piazza, and one night I heard talking and looked out. I saw a crowd and distinguished a man disputing from below with another man on a balcony about fifteen feet from mine, and there was a woman in the room behind him. The dispute was all in dialect, but evidently they were very angry. Presently the man on the balcony drew a revolver, it shone in the doubtful light, and he threatened the man below; but nothing further happened and presently the crowd dispersed, the man on the balcony retired and all

was quiet. Perhaps this was the prelude to a murder, and I may have read about it afterwards in the newspaper without knowing how near I had been to the crime.

There was one other occasion when I thought I was going to see something of the mala vita. On the cliff at Castellinaria are some remains of polygonal buildings which have been made a national monument. The custode's cabin is just below, in a sheltered place where Peppino and I sometimes go and sit after supper. One moonlight evening, it was rather late, but the lamp was still shining in the cabin and the custode was still hanging about, I heard someone approaching and, looking up, saw, against the sky, a sinewy, slight woman in a long black dress with a black shawl over her head. She was coming rapidly along the edge of the cliff with a shuffling, swaying motion, and as she came she was continually rearranging the shawl over her head and chattering volubly to herself in a hoarse, coarse, raucous voice. The custode glanced at her as she drew near and I thought he flinched. I do not know how I knew it, but I was sure she was his wife. She was beside herself with passion. She must have found out something —something about some other woman. I felt as I have felt at an Ibsen play—as though I were looking through the keyhole into a room where dirty linen was about to be washed. She shook and trembled all over like an express train approaching a country station. Reason told me that Peppino and I were safe, we were on the platform ; nevertheless accidents do happen and there was the poor custode on the line. She drew up in front of us, and her draperies swirled round her with the suddenness of her stopping. She became silent and still, while she looked at me as though fixing my appearance on her brain for this life and the next ; she looked at Peppino in the same way and at the custode. Then the chattering began again and the restless rearranging of her shawl over her head. Suddenly she turned, poured herself into the cabin and exploded. It was not as with an earthquake, for the walls

were left standing and the roof and foundations were unshaken, and an earthquake, they say, seems to last for an eternity, whereas this woman seemed to take but a moment to complete her work of desolation. She pounced upon something among the débris and laughed hysterically as she hid it in her bosom.

The storm was over. She was transformed into a rather beautiful and extremely graceful woman of about thirty. She exchanged a few words of friendly chaff with her husband, smiled at Peppino and bowed to me as she passed out, went up the path against the moonlit sky and faded into the night.

All this was about a pack of cards. She had promised to lend the cards to a neighbour that evening ; her husband was to have brought them home early in the day ; he had forgotten to do so and she had come to fetch them. So there was no murder and no dirty linen, but the cabin had to be tidied.

What would this woman do had she the motive and the cue for passion that I had supposed for her ? If her husband ever does entertain another lady in his cabin and his wife hears of it, I hope I may not be in the neighbourhood. But if I were to be there and to witness the crime, omertà would forbid me, as a good Sicilian, to say anything about it. I should have to forget the claims of justice and go to prison, if necessary, rather than give such information as might lead to the conviction of the person or persons guilty.

Lastly, there was the lady in the restaurant-car—but perhaps she ought not to be included in the list. Let her have the benefit of the doubt and a chapter to herself.

CASTELLINARIA

CHAPTER XV

THE CARDINALESSA

One day, as I was travelling through the island by rail, I lunched in the restaurant-car and divided my attention between the colazione, the view and the other lunchers.

At the table in front of me sat three gentlemen ; beyond them, at a separate table, sat a distinguished-looking lady, quietly but well dressed in foamy white musliny stuff, with a good deal of lace and a few touches of pale green. She had a lovely hat and a veil, which she wore in such a way that I thought how well she would look in a motor-car. She did not appear to be much over thirty, and she was alone except that she had a little dog, whom she fed from her plate and who was evidently very fond of her. She was not strictly beautiful, her face depended for its charm more on its expression than on the regularity of its features, but there was about her a certain indescribable combination of dignity and vivacity that was curiously attractive, and that soon attracted the three gentlemen, who, I presently became aware, had entered into conversation with her. Possibly they had asked the waiter to introduce them while I was looking out of the window. Certainly they cannot have met her before, because I heard them ask her her nationality, and she told them that her father was an Italian, a native of Rome, and that her mother was French. And where was she going ? To some place whose name I did not catch. Then she must change at the junction. Yes, but there would be no difficulty because she was accustomed to travelling, she had travelled in China, India, Egypt and America. No doubt she was gifted by nature with that happy temperament which

enables its possessor to make friends easily, and her extensive travels had provided opportunities for its cultivation. I supposed the three gentlemen to be accountants or advocates or perhaps engineers; but I thought from her manner that she would have been just as much at her ease if they had been carabinieri. I heard her tell them she was twenty-two; she must have been very young when she began her travels.

While the waiter was making out our bills, one of the gentlemen begged her to grant him a favour. She smiled in her frank open way as an encouragement to him to name it, and he declared that he should consider it an honour if she would permit him to pay for her luncheon. The lady accepted his generosity, and granted his request with a smile of such queenly condescension that I had a vision of great Elizabeth stepping upon Raleigh's cloak.

Presently this gentleman went and sat by himself at a table for two and the lady joined him. This appeared to me a little odd; he might just as well have sat at her table, or have invited her to sit at his with the other two gentlemen, there was room and it would have been less marked. But they seemed to prefer to start a little colony of their own, as it were, on neutral ground. The gentleman made another proposal: A glass of wine? With pleasure. So the waiter brought it, and then the lady accepted a cigarette.

At the junction the lady and the gentleman both got out, and I saw him help her into her train, which started first for the place whose name I had not caught. Then he got into his train, which was labelled "Castellinaria," and I went on without changing. A few days later, however, I returned to the junction, changed there and followed the accountant to Castellinaria, where I was going to see my friend Antonio, who happened to be engaged there on an engineering job. In the evening I told him about the lady in the restaurant-car. He laughed and said:

"But this lady is a particular friend of mine. She is

often here, she returned two days ago and told me all this herself, only last night. If you would like to make her acquaintance I will take you to see her."

So we went to her hotel, which was not the Albergo della Madonna. She received us in her bedroom, for which she apologised charmingly—so charmingly as to make it appear the most natural thing in the world to be received by her in her bedroom. She remembered seeing me in the train, and begged me to sit down. She had a visitor—a gentleman. It was the gentleman who had paid for her luncheon in the restaurant-car. I was introduced, and he was, as I had supposed, an accountant. The lady was less elaborately clad than on the occasion of our previous meeting. Just as her other costume was precisely what it should have been for a restaurant-car, so this was precisely adapted to her present surroundings. She evidently understood dress. And very pretty it was to see her busying herself about the room, entertaining her guests and playing with her little dog. He was not the only little dog she had ever had. Her previous companion, who had been given her by a Neapolitan gentleman, died, and she wept for six weeks and was inconsolable until another friend gave her this one. She thought first of calling him Vesuvio, which was the name of his predecessor, but could not bring herself to do so. Then she had the inspiration to call him Etna, which suited him better, because he was a trifle bigger; it was also a kind of complimentary reference to her first love. While she told us this she was making coffee with a spirit lamp on the chest of drawers. She had a speciality for making coffee, and really it was quite drinkable.

She gave us the story of her life. She was the niece of a cardinal, in whose person were accumulated all the apostolic virtues, and her mother was a French lady of noble birth and almost incredible beauty, who, when Mary, or Mery as she prefers to write it, was about two months old, married the cardinal's coachman and had eleven more

children. When one draws a conclusion from insufficient data, it is always satisfactory to discover, as one too seldom does, that one was right. I had been right about the gentleman being an accountant, and here I was right again in my surmise that the lady was exceptionally highly connected, so highly that one could overlook her mother's mésalliance with the coachman. Her uncle was only a bishop at the time of her birth, he became a cardinal soon after Mery's mother married the coachman, and then he forced the coachman to legitimise Mery, and in this way the coachman became Mery's legal father ; and all this was part of a scheme to accelerate the ecclesiastical preferment of her uncle. Ah ! but he was an ambitious man and aspired to the throne of S. Peter. His scheme failed, however, owing to the wicked intrigues of the Jesuits.

Parts of this might have borne, I do not say amplification, for it was quite long enough, but a word or two of elucidation. I have no doubt Mery would have been quite ready to explain everything, for she had nothing to conceal and the subject would have done as well as any other to display her feminine charm, but I did not interrupt, because I have observed that when a thorough woman of business undertakes to elucidate a point of law, she does it so much in the manner of Mrs. Nickleby that she not infrequently leaves it more obscure than she finds it. Mery did not expressly say she was a woman of business, she, in fact, disclaimed any such pretension, but she did it with a delightful mock modesty that forbade us to take her words literally.

No expense was spared over Mery's education. She was sent to a convent at Marseilles and the nuns were very kind to her, not because of her ecclesiastical connection, but because they were holy women with large and noble hearts. Before her education was completed, however, she was sent for to return home, and oh, what a home it was ! Her mother's health had broken down because the cardinal beat her, her legal father drank instead of protecting his wife, the younger children were uncared-for and the elder

children, though they were growing up, had not Mery's business capacity and powers of management. She put her shoulder to the wheel, did the marketing, the cooking and the cleaning; she washed and mended the children's clothes and saw to everything. She hated the life, but woman was born to suffer and she did her duty.

In time her next sister married a music-hall singer—I should say a dramatic artist. Mery, who was now entering upon the heyday of her youth and beauty, was naturally introduced to the friends of her sister's husband. Every man in the company fell in love with her; all the bachelors proposed, and without her natural firmness, reinforced by the teaching of the holy nuns, she could scarcely have escaped matrimony. There was another thing that helped to save her—she was waiting for her anima gemella. I may here say that her anima gemella has not yet crossed her path and that her real age is twenty-seven. She told us this in confidence and it is not to go any further. For people in restaurant-cars she is any age she thinks proper at the moment, they do not matter, but she will never deceive her friends.

Her sister's husband was a man of real insight; he divined that Mery was a heaven-inspired dancer, and devoted himself to the development of her genius. She did not say he had taught her to dance; she said he encouraged and developed her natural genius for dancing. She made her début with a success which the newspapers declared to be even more "phenomenal" than that which attends the début of every artist. Engagements followed, and soon she was dancing practically all over the globe, creating a furore wherever she went and leaving the younger children's socks to wash and darn themselves. Her mother was too ill and her legal father too drunk to know what she was doing or where she was doing it, but His Eminence heard and was so much scandalised that when she danced into the Eternal City the doors of the Vatican were closed to her. Cardinals are delightful men,

most of them—and Mery knows because she is on terms of intimacy with every member of the College—but too frequently they have a fault: they do not understand the artistic temperament. Nevertheless, if her uncle could have heard the cheers that greeted her in Shanghai and New York, and the encores that called her back in Cairo and Calcutta, if he could have seen the flowers that choked the wheels of her carriage in St. Petersburg and the diamonds that were showered upon her in Brazil, even his commonplace heart must have been moved.

She did not dance for us because, it seems, they do not dance when they are resting, which was perhaps the psychological reason, but there was also a geographical reason in the want of space, for the room was small and contained, besides Mery and Etna in one arm-chair, another arm-chair and two ordinary chairs occupied by her visitors; also there was the chest of drawers on which she had made the coffee and all such other articles of furniture as one usually sees in a hotel bedroom, including two beds. The extra bed was there because Mery was, she confessed it, of luxurious habits and in the hot weather liked to be able to change and finish the night in a cool bed.

Here there came a pause, not that she was exhausted, but something had happened about the little dog, who required attention. When Etna's business had been settled I thought it might be tactful if I suspended the inconvenience, as they say, so I asked Antonio whether we ought not to go and we begged leave to retire. She wished us good night in her frank, open way, thanked me for my visit, inquired how long I was staying in the town and concluded with the hope that I would call again, she never went out, so I should be sure to find her at any time. It should not be Addio, it should be Arrivederci.

There are few places where I am more at home than I am in Castellinaria, but as I had come there this time expressly to see Antonio he considered it his duty to look after me; he was engaged next day, however, so he deputed

two of his friends to amuse me, and they invited me to come for a drive to the lighthouse. On the way, one of them said:

"And so Antonio took you yesterday to pass an intellectual evening with the cardinalessa."

"Yes," I replied. "What a charming woman and what a strange life!"

They agreed, somewhat coldly as it seemed to me, and they rather markedly refrained from developing the subject I had offered them; but they proposed a counter subject. In a few days it would be Mery's onomastico and they were going to send flowers. I should be in Palermo, would not I send her a message on a picture post-card? Of course I would. So between us we composed it:—

Auguri per l' onomastico. Ringraziamenti per la serata intellettuale e per il caffè. Saluti—non più, per timore di ingelosire nostro amico Antonio.

Devotissimo suo Enrico.[1]

This was the address:—

All' Eminentissima Cardinalessa,

Mery So-and-So,

Albergo dell' Allegria,

Castellinaria.

I chose a card with a picture of St. Peter's; this seemed more appropriate than una ballerina qualunque, which I might have had for the same money, because her onomastico was the 8th September, the birthday of the Madonna, and it was her uncle who had given her the name of Mery and had himself baptised her.

I left Castellinaria next day with the card in my pocket ready to be posted on the 7th September, and went to Palermo, where I know a young doctor. I told him all

[1] Best wishes for your festa. Thanks for the intellectual evening and for the coffee. Greetings—no more, for fear of making our friend Antonio jealous.

Your most devoted Enrico.

about it and showed him the post-card. When he saw Mery's real name he burst out laughing.

" Oh ! that woman ! Why, I know her quite well. She was here with a friend of mine, who asked me to attend her professionally—I mean in my professional capacity. Oh ! nothing serious, but we had to communicate with her people and I know all about her. She is not a normal woman. Of course, that rigmarole about the cardinal is all nonsense. She is the daughter of a fisherman of Siracusa. She did dance here once for a few nights, but only at the Biondo, and no one noticed her, she was in one of the back rows of the ballet. Did they tell you why she returned to Castellinaria ? "

They had said nothing about it, and my doctor, not being a friend of Antonio and therefore not bound by any ties of omertà, gave me an account of it.

It happened a few months previously : Mery was living in Palermo in a hotel, and her room had a balcony ; the next balcony belonged to a room occupied by a young lady and her family, and the young lady was engaged to an officer. One day Etna strayed on to the neighbouring balcony and behaved in a manner that displeased the young lady whose betrothed complained to the proprietor and Mery was requested to leave. She, of course, saw that all this about her dog was merely a casus belli concealing a conspiracy to insult her, and indignantly refused to go. Next day, while the officer was sitting with his friends outside his usual caffè, Mery happened to pass on her way to buy a stamp and post a letter. She spoke to the officer, saying :

" You think a lot of yourself, don't you ? "

The officer requested her not to address him, whereupon, taking the law into her own hands, she went up to him and made a hole in her manners by scratching his face. A crowd began to collect. Mery permitted herself the use of an expression. It was a Sicilian word, my doctor told me what it was and also its meaning ; it appeared to me

rather silly than offensive, but he assured me that it is never used except by people of the very lowest class. Mery then made more holes in her manners, reducing them to the condition of one of her father's fishing-nets, and was attempting to do the same with the officer's face when the crowd interfered; Mery was hissed and handed over to the police, who prepared her papers, took her to the railway station and turned her out of the town.

Incidents such as this, by showing Mery that Sicily is no longer being misgoverned by foreigners, may in time, perhaps, teach her not to distrust professional justice. They also may in time, perhaps, teach travellers not to trust to conclusions based upon insufficient data about distinguished-looking ladies in restaurant-cars.

But I sent her the post-card all the same.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CORPORAL

One makes friends rapidly in Sicily. I made friends for life with all the coast-guards during three or four hours which I spent with them in their caserma. The corporal was the most demonstrative, and after I returned to England we exchanged post-cards for some months. Then he suddenly left off writing, and I drew the conclusion that it is as easy to unmake friends as to make them. But I was wrong. After four and a half years of undeserved neglect I received another post-card:

Since the death of one of my sisters and the occurrence of several other family troubles I have not been able before this day to write and assure you of the great affection which I continue to nourish towards you. For this I beg your pardon and your indulgence. I should have much pleasure in writing you a long letter and in telling you many things. Do you permit me to do so?

I gave the required permission, and presently received the long letter—much too long to be reproduced, but amounting to this :

That he was sorry to hear I had had a cold, and wished he could have had it instead ; we could only hope that heaven would give me good health for a hundred years ; that he was now writing the long letter about which there had been delay in consequence of his having been away at home on leave when the necessary permission reached him ; that he had no words in which to express his joy at hearing that I was soon coming to Sicily, as it was now sixty-three months since he had been in my presence. " Year after year and I have not seen you, spring after spring and I have not seen you, autumn after autumn and I have not seen you, and I have always looked for your coming and have not seen you."

He went on to say that the young lady to whom he was engaged was a beautiful and honest girl, well educated and of a superior but unfortunately poor family. He was longing for the day when he might introduce her to me, for he had now been engaged over four years, and his misery was that he did not know when they could be married. He was thirty-five, and had been in service fifteen years and a half ; on attaining forty he would be able to retire from the service and marry, but in the meantime he was losing all his youth under military discipline ; he had applied for a permanent government post which might be given him at any moment, and then he could retire from the coast-guard service and return to his business ; he was a carpenter by trade, and there would then be no obstacle to his marrying. And sometimes he was in despair because he could marry at once if only he could deposit 8000 francs—a sum that was beyond his means. He saw no way out of his trouble. He had been very unfortunate ever since he was born, and supposed he should continue to be so until he died ; but he had always been economical, and had saved about half the

sum required ; if only he could get the remaining 4000 francs it would be a great good fortune, and in a few days he hoped to send me his photograph together with that of his young lady.

I replied congratulating him on his engagement and regretting that it was not in my power to help him to hasten his marriage. Even if there had been any reason why I should help him I should not have contemplated mixing myself up with the regulations regarding the marriage of coast-guards made by a friendly nation. If one were to begin, it would take a great deal of money to go round Italy endowing all the coastguards who want to marry ; not that he had asked me to do this, he had not even asked me to help him, but it is as well to be prepared for what seems likely to happen next, and I was using a sanctified form of refusal.

In his reply he did not mention the subject ; he said he had been transferred to Castellinaria and had been promoted. He was now Caporale Maggiore. I did not know before that coastguard corporals, like musical scales and Hebrew prophets, could be either major or minor.

I again congratulated him, and hoped his promotion might help to hasten his marriage. Next time I was at Castellinaria I asked Peppino where I should find the caserma of the Guardia di Finanza.

" It is in the church," said Peppino.

" What church ? Not the duomo ? "

" No ; this other church where is no longer the praying and they shall enchant no more the Glory of the Mass with music and the bells are not ringing and there is the cortile near the sea. It is not very long far."

Then I knew he meant the disused church of S. Maria dell' Aiuto which I had often admired. I called there the following day about three in the afternoon and inquired for the corporal. His comrade who let me in took me along two sides of a beautiful cloister, with sculptured marble columns, and upstairs into the barber's shop, where we

found the corporal with a towel round his neck being shaved. He was so surprised to see me that I was afraid there would be an accident, but the barber was clever and nothing serious happened. After the shaving he took me into the dormitory, which extends all along one side of the cloister on the first floor with windows looking on the grass and flowers of the cortile on one side and over the sea on the other—very fresh and healthy. Some of his comrades, who had been on duty all night, were sleeping in their beds, other beds were empty, and their owners were blacking their boots and polishing their buttons. He told them to entertain me, which they did while he finished his dressing. He then returned and proposed taking me out.

As we went along he asked whether he might take me to see his young lady. I was surprised to hear she was in the town, knowing it was not her native place, and asked whether the remaining 4000 francs had dropped from heaven. He replied that he was still waiting. He was to have a month's leave soon, and intended to take the girl to his home and introduce her to his family ; in the meantime he had hired a room, and it was very expensive—twenty francs a month, in the house of most respectable people. I foresaw complications when they should arrive at home, at least I thought the journey might provoke remark among the friends of the family, but I said nothing, and we went to the house of the respectable people. Here I was introduced to the fidanzata, whose name was Filomena, and who appeared to be, as he had said, rather above him in station and of refined and lady-like manners. She was embroidering the top part of a sheet—the part that is turned down and lies over the pillow when the bed is made—no doubt for her trousseau. The design had been traced and traced again from the tracing so often that it was difficult to say what it represented. There was a balustrade of columns like those that were taken from old Kew Bridge and sold to support sun-dials ; there were cauliflowery arabesques, and among the spiky foliage there were

meaningless ponds of open-work made by gathering the threads of the linen together into wonderful patterns. In the middle of all this stood one who after a few more tracings will have quite lost the semblance of a woman ; the five fingers of her hands and the five toes of her feet had already become so conventionalised that all one could be sure of was that there were still five of each. The corporal said that this monster was Helen gazing out to sea from the topless towers of Ilium. She was really looking the other way, exhibiting to the spectator all that remained of the face that launched the thousand ships of which half a dozen were shown riding at anchor behind her back. I did not venture to criticise, because the corporal knew all about it, having seen the *Story of Hector* done by the marionettes. Filomena was embroidering this most beautifully ; I should say that the needle-working of it was as much above all praise as the design of it was beneath all blame.

Most of the room was taken up by a bed large enough to hold three or four Filomenas without crowding, and upon it lay a mandoline and a guitar. The corporal called for music ; Filomena cheerfully complied, left her broidery-frame, and took up the mandoline, whose only title to be considered a musical instrument is that Mozart uses it for the pizzicato accompaniment which Don Giovanni plays while he sings " Deh Vieni." Filomena, knowing nothing about Mozart, used her mandoline for the delivery of a melody which she performed with great skill, though it was but a silly tune and sounded sillier than it was because of the irritating tremolo. It was like her embroidery—very well done but not worth doing. She had been taught the mandoline by the nuns, who had also taught her needlework. I expected the corporal to accompany her on the guitar ; he admitted that he was passionately devoted to music, but excused himself from performing on the ground that he had not studied it. This is not usually put forward as an objection ; the rule is

for them to play and tell one, unnecessarily but with some pride, that they are doing it all by ear. And in their accompaniment they show themselves to be artists of the school that preaches "Simplify, simplify, simplify" in that they exclude all harmonies except those of the tonic, dominant and sub-dominant. But they make the mistake of not being careful always to play each in its right place; they carry their simplifying process to the length of using their chosen harmonies in regular order, one after the other, two bars each—it may come right and it may not, and when it does not the resulting complexities ruin the simplicity. This sort of thing might become unbearable, but I know how to escape from people of the corporal's class without being rude. I do not tell them I have another engagement—that is not accepted because, as there is no time in Sicily, punctuality is not recognised. If they have a proverb about it, it ought to be, "Never put off till to-morrow what can be done the day after." Nor do I say I have letters to write—that only provokes discussion:

"We thought you had come all this way to see us, and now you want to write to England! You can talk to your English friends when you are at home."

The course is to say one wants to sleep; one need not sleep, but no objection is made, and one is usually allowed to depart at once. I have not ventured to try this among my aristocratic friends, I doubt whether it would work with them—besides, they disarm me by handing round tea—but with corporals I employ it freely, and the knowledge that I can always get away in a moment, even if I choose to remain, imparts to their company a sense of freedom which I regret to say I have sometimes looked for in vain in the educated drawing-rooms of the upper classes.

Before Filomena could begin her third piece I put my method in practice, and for once it did not work quite smoothly, but the result was not unsatisfactory.

Certainly I might sleep, said the corporal; but why go away? He hoped I should dine with them. I might name

my own hour and, as for sleeping, there was the bed. Besides, his brother was coming to dinner :

" I want you to know my brother," said the corporal ; " he is not like me."

" But, my dear Corporal, that is no recommendation," I replied. " Is he also a coast-guard ? "

" No. He is a dentist and very clever. He is an artificial dentist and he had to work to learn his profession."

" Well, I suppose every dentist must learn his profession before he is qualified. Dentists have to be made, they are not like poets. No one is a natural born dentist."

" He had to work very hard. For a whole year he went to the hospital every day four times a week."

" A clever dentist is a useful ally. I should like to know him. I might want his help while I am here. What is his name ? "

" Ah yes ! That will interest you, he has an English name." Then he said something that sounded like " He ran away " with the " r " and the " w " both misty. As I did not recognise it, he wrote it down for me—" Ivanhoe."

" If you send him your teeth," continued the corporal, " he will repair them and return them to you as good as new."

" Some of them are getting loose," I admitted, " but they wouldn't come out so easily as you think, and how should I ever get them in again ?—Oh, I see what you mean, he is a dentist in artificial teeth."

" Of course. When I say he is not like me, I mean that he is a man of great learning, really well educated. He is very clever. You will see him at dinner. I must not keep you talking, you wish to sleep. There is the bed ; why not lie down ? If only we were in my own house at home—" and so on.

There was the bed, certainly, if I could conquer my bashfulness and make use of it. Filomena treated the proposal as quite natural, and put the guitar and the mandoline on the chest of drawers, though there would have been plenty

of room for them on the bed with me ; she and the corporal prepared to leave the room, and I accepted their hospitality with excuses which I fancy I made with some realism because Peppino had kept me up talking half the night. They went away, I took off my boots, lay down on Filomena's bed, and was asleep in a moment.

At about six o'clock the noise of the corporal opening the door woke me. He hoped he had not disturbed me, he had been in several times to fetch things and had tried to make no noise. I had known nothing about it. Ivanhoe had come and was very hungry. Then he showed me the cupboard containing the basin and water for me to wash, and told his fidanzata we were ready for the dinner which she had been cooking while I slept. He seemed to consider the room as his instead of hers—but then it was he who was paying the twenty francs a month. Still I had a sense as though there was something wrong.

I was introduced to Ivanhoe, and we sat down to Filomena's dinner, which was like her embroidery and like her music—it was very well cooked, but the materials on which her skill had been expended were not worth cooking, they ought not to have been bought. The young lady was one of those artists who think more of treatment than of subject. The corporal, on the other hand, in the management of his matrimonial affairs, had chosen a good subject but was treating it in a way which my English prejudices made me think too free.

" I have not asked after your cold," said the corporal to his brother. " I hope it is better."

" It is quite well, thank you," replied Ivanhoe. " I have cured it with a remedy that never fails."

" I wish you could tell me what it is," I said.

" Willingly," said Ivanhoe. " You take a pail of water and a piece of iron ; you make the iron red-hot and plunge it into the water ; at first the water fizzles, but when the iron is cold the water is still ; you put the water into

bottles and drink one every day with your dinner. It always cures a cold."

"I must try it," I said. But I don't think I shall.

"Surely you know how to cure colds in England, where you all live in a perpetual fog and everyone is so rich that they can afford to make experiments?"

"We have poor people also in England."

But Ivanhoe knew better. "No," he said, smiling indulgently, "that is your English modesty; there are no poor people in your country."

"I assure you I have seen plenty. And as for modesty, I don't care very much about modesty—not for myself; I don't mind it in others."

"Ah! but you English are so practical."

"You have great men in England," said the corporal. "Chamberlain, Lincoln, you call him il presidente, and Darwin and——"

"Yes," interrupted Ivanhoe, "and great poets, Byron and Milton—il Paradiso Perduto—and that other one who wrote the drama named—what is his name? Gladstone."

"Some of our poets have written drama," I said. "What particular drama do you mean?"

"The one—it is from the History of Rome," replied Ivanhoe. "A man kills his wife, but I do not remember his name."

"Was it Romeo?" suggested the corporal.

"No; not Romeo. This was a black man. I read that Giovanni Grasso acted it in London."

"It was Amleto," said the corporal.

"No, it was not," replied Ivanhoe. "And now I remember he was not black; he lived in Holland."

"Where is Holland?" inquired the corporal.

"Holland is in the north. The people who live there are called Aragonesi."

While Filomena prepared the coffee, I asked the corporal whether she allowed smoking in her bedroom. She did, so I gave him a cigarette and he admired my case saying it was

sympathetic. I also gave Ivanhoe a cigarette, but Filomena did not smoke. There is a prejudice against ladies smoking in Sicily unless they wish to be considered as belonging either to the very highest or to the very lowest class, and Filomena is content to belong to her own class. So she looked on while we smoked and drank our coffee.

I said: "When we were speaking of English poets just now, you mentioned a name which we are more accustomed to associate with politics, the name of Gladstone."

"Ah! politics!" said Ivanhoe. "You have now in England a struggle between your House of Lords and your House of Commons, is it not so?"

I replied that I had heard something about it.

"It is civil war," said Ivanhoe, "that is, it would have been civil war some years ago, but people are now beginning to see that it is intolerable that everyone should not be allowed to have his own way."

"I am afraid I do not quite follow you," I said.

"Well," he explained, "it is not difficult. Your House of Commons is composed entirely of poor men, so poor that they cannot afford to pay for legislation. Your House of Lords is rich, and rich people are egoists and will not pay; so the House of Commons is angry."

I did not ask where all the poor Members of the House of Commons were found in a country that had no poor people; Ivanhoe was too full of his subject to give me an opportunity.

"If the House of Lords still continues refusing to pay for legislation there will be no war, but the House of Lords will be abolished—annihilated."

"My dear Ivanhoe," I exclaimed, "what a head you have for politics!"

"Politics are quite simple if one studies the newspapers. I know all the politics of Italy, of France, Germany, England, Argentina, Russia. Don't you read the papers?"

"Yes, I read the papers, but I do not find our English papers——"

" Perhaps they are not so well edited as ours ? "

" That may be the explanation," I agreed. " They certainly do not state things so clearly and simply as you do."

" Surely," he continued, " you do not approve of war ? "

I replied that war was a " terrible scourge."

" It is worse," said Ivanhoe. " It is a survival of barbarism that men should make a living out of killing each other. War must be abolished."

" Will not that be rather difficult ? " I objected.

" Not at all," he replied. " Soldiers are the instruments of war. If there were no soldiers there would be no war ; just as if there were no mandolines there would be no music. And the money we now pay to the soldiers could then be distributed among the poor—an act pleasing to God and the saints."

But this did not suit the corporal who, being a coast-guard, had no sympathy with cutting down the pay of the army.

" It is better as it is," said the corporal. " It is better to pay the money to soldiers, who are earning an honest living, than to pay it to poor people and encourage them in their idleness."

" But soldiers are receiving money for making war possible and that is not earning an honest living. There must be no more war. Soldiers must be abolished—obliterated."

" Obliterated " woke the corporal up thoroughly. It was all very well to talk about annihilating the House of Lords, which he had understood to mean demolishing some palace, but the army was a body of men, and if we were to begin obliterating them—why, he had friends in the army and it would never do, because—and so on, with interruptions by Ivanhoe, until Filomena began to grow restless about washing up and I began to take my leave. I thanked her for her charming hospitality and the corporal and Ivanhoe accompanied me back to the Albergo della Madonna. On the way I said :

" Please tell me, Corporal, you say that Filomena is your fidanzata, but it seems to me you are as good as——"

" We are not married," he interrupted, " but she has consented to become the mother of my children."

" Do I understand that you have already taken steps to ensure the attainment of that happy result ? "

He said he had, and that she was coming home with him in order that the baby might be born there. His people, who understood the sincerity of his nature and the purity of his motives——

" Ah yes, indeed," interrupted Ivanhoe, " my brother has a heart of gold and we are all satisfied with his conduct."

" But Filomena's family," continued the corporal, " are suspicious and unfriendly and dissatisfied. Her adorata mamma and all her aunts and female cousins wept when she left home, and they are still weeping. But what else could we do ? She was getting ill after waiting so long and could not——"

" Yes," interrupted Ivanhoe, " she was becoming like Ettorina, and my poor brother also was unhappy."

They admitted that the situation, though the best possible, was not ideal. The corporal has to sleep at the caserma and pretend to the authorities that he is a free bachelor, he can only visit the mother of his future children in his spare time. And this regrettable state of things had arisen in consequence, or partly in consequence, of my respect for law and order. I did not put it like that to him. I pointed out that if I had sent the 4000 francs I should have been obliged to deny myself the pleasure of coming to see him in Sicily. He concurred and thanked me for my consideration. His experience of life had already taught him that the same money cannot be spent on two different objects, and he was grateful to me for choosing the one which gave him the pleasure of making me acquainted with his fidanzata. The 4000 francs from some other source or the government appointment might drop into his

lap at any moment, and at the latest, he could regularise his position in five years, when he should be forty, by leaving the service, returning to the carpentry, marrying and legitimising any children that might have been born.

So I said good-bye to the brothers, wished the corporal every happiness and gave him my sympathetic cigarette-case as a non-wedding present, or rather as something that by an enharmonic change should become transformed into a wedding present on the solemnisation of his marriage, and he swore to keep it till death as a ricordo of our friendship.

Next morning Ivanhoe called upon me and said:

"My dear Signor Enrico, I am in want. Would it be possible for you to lend me five francs till next week?"

I replied, "My dear Ivanhoe, it distresses me to hear you are in want and it lacerates my heart that you should have made a request which I am compelled to decline."

"I do not ask for myself. It is for my children."

"Would you mind telling me, merely as a matter of idle curiosity and without prejudice to the question of the five francs, whether the mother of your children is your wife or your fidanzata?"

"She is my wife. We have been married thirteen months."

"And how many children have you?"

"I have two."

"Only two!"

"I am expecting another in a few weeks."

"Bravo. Of course that alters the situation. Now suppose we settle it this way: Let us pretend that you ask me to lend you three francs, one for each child; I refuse, but propose, instead, to give you one franc on the faith of the new baby."

"Do you mean you abandon all hope of ever seeing the one franc again?"

"I do."

"Make it two francs and I agree."

"No, Ivanhoe. One franc is quite enough for an unborn baby."

"If you think so."

So I gave him one franc.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said, "and now there is one more favour I wish to ask of you. Will you hold the new baby at the baptismal font and thus do me the honour of becoming my compare?"

This did not suit me at all. I replied: "My dear Ivanhoe, let us forget all we have said since you told me you were expecting another baby, let us return to your original request and here—take four more francs. It will be better for me in the end than if I become your compare."

"If you think so," said Ivanhoe.

I had no doubt about it, so I gave him four more francs and abandoned all hope of ever seeing them again; but I got my money's worth, or part of it, in the shape of a registered letter soon after my return to London; in English the letter runs thus, and I was brutal enough to leave it unanswered:

CASTELLINARIA.

My most esteemed friend, Signor Enrico!

First of all I must inform you that my health is excellent and I hope that yours also is good. I wish you all the happiness that it is possible for anyone to have in this world and I would that I could transport my presence into London so that I might be with you for a few days and thus augment your domestic joy. But there is one thing wanting—I allude to money. So many misfortunes have happened to me in this sad year that I have not the means to undertake a long journey. I should be much obliged to you if you would kindly forward me 300 francs, of which I am in urgent need as I have to pay a debt. This money I will repay you immediately the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you in Castellinaria or, if you prefer it, I will promise to pay you in seven months from this date by sending the money through the post; it is for you to choose which course would suit you

best. You will find in me an honest man. You will be doing me a favour for which I shall be grateful all the rest of my life, for you will be extricating me from a position of extreme discomfort. The Padre Eterno will bless your philanthropic and humane action and I shall have a memory sculptured on my heart as long as I live.

I will ever pray for your health and for that of all your family. The favour I am now asking I should like you to grant during the week after you receive this letter. I will not write more except to say that, relying on the goodness of your heart, I thank you cordially and await your favourable reply.

With infinite salutations,

I subscribe myself yours for life,

IVANHOE.

EARTHQUAKE ECHOES

CHAPTER XVII

TOTÒ CARBONARO

One morning, in the autumn of 1908, I was sitting in front of one of the windows of the albergo looking out across the harbour at the mountains of Calabria, waiting for coffee and thinking of *Omertà*. I had been spending a week in Messina with Giovanni Grasso and his company of Sicilian Players, and *Omertà* was the play they had performed the preceding evening. I remembered how at the end Giovanni had staggered in mortally wounded and refused to give the name of his murderer—though the audience guessed who it must have been—and then how he had given his knife to Pasqualino, his young brother, and with his last breath had spoken these words: "Per Don Totò, quando avrai diciotto anni"; and I had left the theatre wishing I could see Giovanni as Pasqualino grown up and executing the vendetta. Giovanni now uses a revolver as being a nobler weapon, but when I was with him in Messina it was a knife.

The big waiter brought the coffee and stood on my left, the little waiter followed him and stood on my right. During the week I had often seen this boy who was not yet a real waiter, he was learning his business by waiting on the waiters, and hitherto I had respected the convention by which I was supposed to be unaware of his existence, except that when he had made way for me on the stairs we had exchanged greetings. I said to the big waiter:

"How old is this little fellow?"

"Thirteen."

I glanced at him and saw by his smile of expansive

friendliness that he was pleased to be the subject of our conversation.

"What do you call him?"

"Totò."

I took my knife off the breakfast table and imitating Giovanni, as well as I could, handed it to the big waiter saying:

"For Don Totò when he shall be eighteen years old."

This was perhaps wrong, it was certainly risky to play with edged tools in this way in a country where one ought not to give a handkerchief as a ricordo lest one should be supposed to be intending to pass the tears it contains. But I assumed he had seen the play and, although the quotation was not exact, expected him to recognise it, instead of which he was furious with me:

"You are not to do that. Totò is a very good boy and I shall not accept the knife."

He said this so sternly that I made up my mind he could know nothing about the theatre—he must be a foreigner who had yet to learn that a Sicilian child's confidence is not destroyed by a mere threat to stick a knife into him, the idea that anyone is going to hurt him is too preposterous to be taken seriously. Or perhaps he had invested all his imagination in superstitious securities. Or perhaps I had acted better than I knew and had seriously alarmed him. But I had not imitated Giovanni's realism so closely as to deceive Totò. I looked at him. He was beaming all over his face as he shook his head and said:

"I am not afraid."

The big waiter scowled and went away, abandoning the reckless child to his fate. Totò put his hand on my arm to attract my attention and emphasise what he was going to say:

"When you are at home, please will you send me a post-card with a picture of London?"

"Certainly, my boy; I'll send you as many as you like."

This is all the conversation I had with Totò before I left Messina, which I did that day, but we have corresponded. On returning to London I sent him a card with a view of Oxford Circus full of traffic and, not knowing his full name, addressed it :

A Don Totò,
Piccolo Cameriere all' Albergo Trinacria,
Messina.

He replied at once, thanking me profusely for the beautiful view of what he called I Quattro Canti di Londra and promising to send me some prickly pears as soon as they were at their best, having heard that they do not mature in London. Presently I sent him another post-card secretly hoping he would show them both to the stupid big waiter. He replied at once and, among other things, asked if I should like him to come to London.

I never like them to come to London unless they are sure of some settled employment, and even then I would rather see them in their native surroundings ; so I replied :

No, Totò. Here we already have too many Italians, Austrians, Swiss and Germans. They come because they believe that the streets of London are paved with gold, but too many of them find our streets guttered by the tears of foreign waiters who have failed to find work. You had much better stay where you are like a good boy, and I will come to Messina and see you next autumn.

Then a basket arrived containing the prickly pears in a state of pulp, exuding juice from every pore because he had not attempted to pack them, and accompanied by a card wishing me a Merry Christmas.

Early in the morning of the 28th December, 1908, Messina was destroyed by an earthquake. The newspapers particularly mentioned that the Albergo Trinacria had fallen, killing everyone who was sleeping there that night. I chanced a card to Totò asking whether he had escaped. On the 6th January I received a letter from him ; he had

evidently not received my card, which was returned to me about eight months later. This is a translation of Totò's letter:

CATANIA,
1 *Jan.*, 1909.

Egregious Signor Enrico,

You must have already heard of the destruction of Messina. By a miracle I am saved, also my family, except that I do not yet know the fate of two of my sisters, my father, three nephews and one brother-in-law. My father was at Reggio Calabria, which was also destroyed. The Albergo Trinacria was not merely shaken down, it was also burnt. It was my good fortune not to be on guard that night in the hotel, otherwise I too should have died. The few who have escaped have been brought to Catania naked, without a soldo. We are sleeping in the Municipio, on the floor, with a rug, a piece of bread and cheese and a glass of wine which the Municipio gives us. They have made me a present of a shirt because, as the earthquake was at five in the morning, everyone was asleep and they escaped just as they were. You may imagine in what a condition I find myself, in what misery, it is such that you will excuse my posting this letter without a stamp, but I have not a centesimo to send you the news of the disaster of Messina. On the post-card which you sent me you speak of coming in the autumn, but there will be no more coming to Messina.

Enough! I could tell you in detail of many misfortunes that have overtaken me, but I have not the courage to write more.

I send you my respects. You will pardon me for being obliged to post this without a stamp.

TOTÒ.

He gave me an address in Catania to which I wrote, and he replied 24th January from Naples, where he and his family had been taken.

Then he left off writing and I thought I had heard the last of him. In the spring of 1910 I went to Sicily again, and within an hour of arriving at my hotel in Catania one of the waiters came up to me and said in a friendly way:

"Good day, sir."

"Good day," I replied, "but I do not recognise you."

He said, "Totò. Messina."

"It is not possible! You were only thirteen at Messina, and how old are you now?"

"Eighteen."

"How have you managed to become five years older in eighteen months? Is it an effect of the earthquake?"

"I was sixteen at Messina."

"Then why did that stupid big waiter say you were only thirteen?"

"Ah! well, he is dead now."

I thought of the fate of Ananias and said: "Poor fellow! Do you remember how angry he was when I wanted to give him my knife and said those words from *Omertà?*"

"Yes, but he was not really angry with you, he was only pretending."

"No, Totò! Not really? Do you mean he was acting?"

"Yes. I thought you understood. He was always like that, full of fun, not stupid at all. He was a good man and very kind to me." And poor Totò's eyes filled with tears.

So it was someone else who had been stupid, and I left off thinking of Ananias and began to think of those eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell.

Totò told me that he was sleeping at home when the earthquake woke him up, and that he and the others in his house ran out naked as they were into the street and saw the house fall; they were only just in time. His father, who was in Reggio, was saved, but one of his sisters was killed with her husband and three children.

This is all the conversation I had with Totò in Catania; next day on my inquiring for him they told me he had caught cold and had not come to the Albergo. I left without seeing him again and next time I was in Catania they told me he had gone away and they did not know his address. Possibly he has disappeared for ever, but it is

more probable that, like other meteoric bodies, he will cross my path again some day.

TURIDDU BALISTRIERI

Among the members of Giovanni's company whose acquaintance I made during my week in Messina were two ladies who acted under their maiden names, viz. Marinella Bragaglia and Carolina Balistrieri ; the first is married to Vittorio Marazzi and the second to Corrado Bragaglia, Corrado being the brother of Marinella. I also often saw in the theatre Turiddu (Salvatore) Balistrieri, brother of Carolina and therefore brother-in-law to Corrado and brother-in-law by marriage (or whatever the correct expression may be and, if there is no correct expression, then compare di parentela) to Vittorio and Marinella Marazzi. He was just over eleven, not a member of the company but, being at school in Messina, his sister had taken him to stay with her for the week, and we became great friends. I was thinking of him when writing about Micio buying chocolate and story-books at Castellinaria in Chapter XVIII of *Diversions in Sicily*. When Giovanni and the company departed from Messina to continue their tour, Turiddu and his younger brother, Gennaro, remained in Messina with their professor and, as their mother, Signora Balistrieri, was touring with another company in South America, they had no home to go to for Christmas and remained with the professor for the holidays.

On the 27th December, Giovanni and his company, after being in Egypt and in Russia, arrived at Udine, north of Venice. They heard nothing of the earthquake until the evening of the 29th December, about forty hours after the event, when the news reached them in the theatre during the performance of *La Figlia di Jorio*. The next day Giovanni and six of the company started for Messina ; they wanted to ascertain for themselves the extent of the

disaster and whether the earthquake had affected Catania, where most of their relations and friends were. Among the six were Corrado Bragaglia and Vittorio Marazzi, whose particular object was to find out what had happened to Turiddu and Gennaro. When the company came to London in the spring of 1910 Corrado gave me an account of their adventures. They arrived in Naples where they were delayed a day, which they spent in meeting fugitives, but they heard no news of the boys. They reached Messina on the 1st January and, taking a basket of provisions and medicines, started for the professor's house, treading on dead bodies as they walked through the falling rain and fearing lest another shock might come or that at any moment some already shattered house might fall on them. The professor's apartments were on the first and second floors of one side of a courtyard that stood between a street and a torrent ; the front doors of the different apartments opened into the court as in a college building ; the professor's side of the court was nearest the torrent and did not fall, but the other three sides of the court fell and the houses on the opposite side of the street fell, so that the débris made it difficult to approach the street door of the court and still more difficult afterwards to approach the doors of the different sets of apartments.

They found the landlord of the house, and he showed them that the professor's part of the house had not fallen and told them that the professor and his family had escaped and, he believed, had been taken to Naples or Catania, or—he did not know where. This was satisfactory, at least they no longer thought the children were buried in the ruins, but it did not give much information as to their whereabouts. They went to the station and got a permission to go to Catania. The train was crowded with fugitives, some wounded, some unhurt, and during the journey a passenger gave birth to a baby.

In Catania they asked of Madama Ciccia (i.e. Signora Grasso, Giovanni's mother), who would certainly have

heard if the children had been seen in the city, but she knew nothing. They sought out the boys' grandmother, the mother of Signora Balistrieri, but she was not at home, she had deserted her house for fear of another earthquake and had been sleeping in the piazza. They inquired at the hospital and at the institutions where fugitives had been taken. They advertised. They actually found a professor from Messina with pupils, but it was not the one they wanted. They went to Siracusa, to Malta, to Palermo, to Trapani ; they got no information and returned to Catania. Then they were struck with remorse for not having entered the professor's house in Messina—they had only spoken to the landlord—the boys might be buried there after all, alive or dead. They returned to Messina and entered the house ; it was all in confusion ; they looked through it, but found no trace of the children.

All this took them seven days, during which they scarcely ate and scarcely slept. They knew that if the boys had really been taken to Naples they were probably safe, and now they went there considering that they had done their best with Sicily. In Naples they inquired at the official places, at the hospitals and at the offices of the newspapers where they could see the lists of names before they were published. They found nothing and their thoughts went back to Messina ; they wondered whether the children might perhaps have been crushed by a falling house in the streets, and whether they ought to return. In the evening they went to a caffè to read the lists, and by chance took up a Roman paper. They could hardly believe their eyes when they read the names of Turiddu and Gennaro among those who had been taken to the Istituto Vittoria Colonna in Naples. They went there at once, but it was already late at night and the place was shut. Unable to think of eating or sleeping they walked about the streets till six in the morning, when they returned and were admitted. They stated their business, inquired for the children, produced photographs and, after a little delay, Turiddu

and Gennaro came running to them naked. It took some days of red tape, including a legal act whereby Corrado constituted himself their second father, before they were allowed to remove the boys. At last on the 11th January they took possession of them and dressed them in the street with clothes they had bought. Corrado had telegraphed to his wife and to the other relations, and they left Naples and rejoined the company at Udine, where they arrived on the 14th. One of the actors when he saw the children fainted and Corrado was ill for days with a fever.

Turiddu wrote to me from Naples to tell me he was saved, and by August, 1909, when I went to Sicily again, he had left Giovanni and the company and returned to Naples, where I found him and Gennaro with the professor and his family, living in two rooms of an establishment where emigrants are put to wait for their ships to take them to America. They told me their experiences. In Messina the family had consisted of the professor, his wife, his niece (a studentessa), Turiddu and Gennaro with two of their school-fellows, one named Peppino, son of a well-to-do dealer in iron bedsteads, and another named Luigi, son of a well-to-do orange-merchant, who had gone to visit his uncle for Christmas. There was also a servant girl who had gone that night to stay with her people. The parents of Peppino and Luigi were both killed in their houses; fortunately for Peppino he had not gone home or he would probably have been killed. Luigi also escaped because the house of his uncle did not fall or, if it fell, it did not kill him. The servant, who had gone home, was killed.

They puzzled me by their attempts to explain why the professor's side of the courtyard did not fall. It seems it was partly because, being near the torrent, it had been built more strongly than the other three sides; that was not all, there was also something about a Japanese gentleman who had studied earthquakes at home and who had hurried to Messina, visited the spot and declared that the direction of the shock was from (say) east to west, had it been from

west to east the side near the torrent would certainly have fallen. It may have been north to south—my thoughts had wandered again to the Tower of Siloam. Turiddu, however, had a reason for not being killed in the earthquake ; he is naturally lucky because he was born with a caul ; he keeps most of it at home and speaks of it as his cammisedda, which is Sicilian for camicetta, his little shirt. He carries a small piece of it in his watch-case, and offered to give it to me as a ricordo, but I thought he had better keep it all ; it cannot be lucky to give away any of one's luck.

While Turiddu was with Giovanni and the company touring in North Italy, he wrote, by desire of his professor, a sort of holiday task about the earthquake. He gave it to me afterwards, when I saw him in Naples, and I have translated it. The passages in square brackets are additions I have made from information the family gave me in Naples.

SUBJECT

Describe all that you saw before and after the earthquake.

DESCRIPTION

It was an ugly winter evening and the last day of the Christmas holidays. I was playing with nuts with my companions. About six o'clock we dined and, after we had finished, we began to play at Sette e Mezzo Reale [a game of cards]. We re-charged the acetylene lamps, for we intended to sit up late. The professor opened [the window and went out on] the balcony to see what the weather was like ; observing that the sky was frightful and of a reddish colour, he said to his wife :

" My dear Nunzia, listen to these few words and bear them in mind : This is a fatal night, it is a horrible night."

His wife asked, " What are you saying ? "

Then the professor replied, " Either we shall have some kind of storm or there will be a great earthquake or a deluge."

To these words we paid no attention, but went on with our game.

At one o'clock after midnight we extinguished the acetylene gas and went to bed, where we immediately fell asleep.

At half-past five after midnight there came a great earthquake. I and my companions began to cry and recommend ourselves to God who can save from every calamity.

After the earthquake was over we dressed in haste and frenzy and went out [into the courtyard], but we could not pass the front door [into the street] because it was blocked with ruins. Presently our professor crawled out through a hole and we followed him.

In the piazza we saw sights that tore our hearts, and we wept as we thought of those poor unhappy children left without parents or relations. And we thanked God who had saved us from such a great disaster. Every few moments there came more shocks, and there were we weeping and recommending ourselves to the Lord.

As day broke we saw many wretched creatures being dragged out from under the heaps of rubbish and being put on carts or laid on the ground.

We began to feel hungry and begged our professor to buy us some bread, but he replied :

" There is no place where bread can be bought, we must therefore take courage, climb back into the house and get a few nuts."

[This re-entering the house was dangerous because it might have fallen when they were inside, but they managed it in safety and returned with some maccaroni and bread, also some nuts and two sticks of dried figs which were there for the festa of Christmas.]

We began to eat the food and, seeing some children near us who also were hungry, were moved to compassion for their condition and gave them each something.

In this way we supported life for two days, but on the third day the food was finished.

[During these two days they were in the ruins of a fish-market, which was better than being out in the open, but not much because the roof was broken. They only had such clothes as they had snatched up in their haste and these were wet through and saturated with mud up to the knees. They caught colds and the professor was ill for months.]

All day long, bodies were being extricated from the ruins and we could hardly bear the stench ; to make matters worse it was raining, the houses were on fire, the air was heavy

with smoke and there were constant shocks of earthquake. It seemed like the end of the world.

On the third day I went with our professor to the port to inquire whether the survivors would be taken to Naples. The captain replied " Yes." We returned to the market and our path lay among the wounded and the dead.

When we had reached shelter our professor said :

" Let us take courage and return into the house to bring out some clothes and linen and the certificates of my niece."

We went to the house, but the door was jammed by reason of the earthquake. While we were shaking it, there came another shock. We remembered another door, which we opened, we went in and found the certificates and brought away all such other things as we thought likely to be useful for the moment and gradually carried them down. Our professor's niece made the things up into bundles and put them on our shoulders and so, passing the heaps of dead bodies, of rubbish and ruins, we went to the railway station.

Here they made us get into a second-class carriage, which we supposed would start for Catania, and we had nothing to eat but oranges, which were given us by a soldier.

[It must have been while they were in this carriage that Corrado and Vittorio went to the station and took train for Catania, passing quite close to them and not seeing them. There were twelve waggon-loads of oranges which had come from Catania before the disaster in the course of trade, and orders were given that they were to be distributed among the survivors. Thus the waggons were emptied and people could be put into them.]

Opposite us was a waggon full of soldiers and sailors. Our professor's niece called a soldier and begged him not to forget us. He immediately brought us three loaves of bread, five flasks of wine, three tins of preserved meat and some sausage.

Imagine our happiness when we saw that meat after those days of hunger ! We drank the wine at once because we had nowhere else to put it and the soldiers wanted their flasks back. We were eating oranges all the time, because they gave us plenty.

After we had been in this waggon two days, one of the railway-men told us that there had come a German steamer which would take us to Naples. We took with us some bread,

some oranges and a little salame which we had over, and went to the port, where, fortunately, we found a boat which took us to the steamer.

At five minutes past eleven on the sixth day as the steamer departed from Messina, the professor, his wife and his niece began to cry.

The German sailors prepared bread and also basins of soup with pasta in it, and when the bell sounded at noon they distributed the food among us all.

When we had eaten it, we went below to see whether the women required anything.

At half-past four they gave us soup with rice in it and plenty of meat. Then the captain ordered that the fugitives should go below. We were taken into the second-class cabin which was set apart for the women and children.

Next day when we arrived at Naples they would not let us disembark till we had had coffee, after which we all collected and were landed in boats. First, however, they made all the men descend into one boat and in another boat all the women.

When we had disembarked at Naples they at once wanted all our names and then took us to an institution called "Vittoria Colonna," where in order to restore us we were each given a good cup of coffee and milk.

THIS LITTLE DESCRIPTION
OF
28 DECEMBER 1908
WRITTEN AT BOLOGNA 27. I. 09
IS PRESENTED TO
MR. HENRY FESTING JONES
WHO WILL PRESERVE IT AS A LASTING RECORD
OF
TURIDDU BALISTRIERI
FUGITIVE FROM MESSINA

While they were in Messina the children and the niece slept at night, but the professor and his wife did not sleep at all, and for two of the days the professor and his wife ate nothing and drank nothing. They were able to collect drops of rain water, especially when they were in the railway carriage where they had a roof, and they sometimes

collected a little wood and made a fire. Earthquake shocks were continually occurring.

The professor is also an imbalsamatore and, as an example of his skill, gave me a stuffed bird which I was to take to London. He said it was a kind of quail, a bird that reposes near Messina when migrating. His niece, the studentessa, gave me as a ricordo a pin-cushion ; on one side it has an advertisement of a shop in Messina and on the other a picture of a lady trying on a new garter, which has been bought at the shop and which fits perfectly to the delight of her maid and the astonishment of her grandmother. They had saved these things after the earthquake. One does not look a gift-horse in the mouth, but I have sometimes wondered whether the buffo's Cold Dawn had followed the professor and the studentessa in their flight and whispered to them that they had saved the wrong objects. Still, a pin-cushion is always useful.

RAILWAY PORTERS

Some years ago the station porter who attended to my luggage at Messina gave me his name and address, saying that if I would send him a post-card next time I came, he would meet me and look after me. Since then I have passed through Messina once, and sometimes twice, a year and he has always met me. I wrote to him from London after the earthquake inquiring whether he was alive or dead, but he did not receive my card till nearly eight months later, after it had been returned to me and I had sent it to him again. I had in the meantime heard, in an indirect way, that he was one of the station porters who had survived. In the August following the earthquake I sent him a card to say I was coming by steamer from Naples, and he was in a little boat in the port to meet me.

There was a difference in his manner and a new look in his eyes. When he had been talking some time, I mentioned

it, and he admitted that he felt different since the earthquake. His house fell and he lay buried in the ruins with nothing to eat or drink and seriously wounded. A friend came looking for him and after three days he was extricated, restored to life and properly taken care of. But his wife and child were killed and his home destroyed. He has been born again naked into the world, no wonder there is a strange look in his eyes. We were joined by his cousin, another porter, who was seven days in the ruins, starved into unconsciousness. When the soldiers rescued him they thought he was dead, but they took him where the doctors gradually brought him back to life. He did not mind the dying after it had once set in, everything gave way to the indolent pleasure of irresponsible drifting, but the restoration was a difficult and exhausting business. He will be thought to be dead again some day, and will be allowed to continue his sleep in peace without any troublesome awakening.

I looked in the eyes of the men who were hanging about among the temporary wooden sheds in the piazza in front of the station, and saw in many of them the expression that was in my porter's eyes, the expression that betrays those who are the figli del terremoto, those who have been born again with the earthquake for their second mother, and I remembered that the same expression was in the eyes of Turiddu's professor in Naples. I had supposed it to be normal with the professor, but it was the first time I had seen him ; now I understood that it was not there before. They have not all this look. Turiddu has not got it, nor has my porter's cousin. The professor is sixty-two, Turiddu is only twelve and was able to sleep. My porter is about forty-two, his cousin is not yet thirty. Again, the professor had the responsibility of his party ; Turiddu had none. My porter has lost his wife and child ; his cousin is unmarried.

These two porters told me a great deal that I had read in the papers in England ; to hear it from them on the spot

made it more real, and especially to see their gestures describing how the earthquake took the houses and worried them as a terrier worries a rat. Few houses were not wrecked. I pointed to one which I knew to be the Palazzo dei Carabinieri at a corner of a street leading out of the station piazza, but my porter replied :

" You are looking at a corner of it and can only see two walls. The other walls and the floors have fallen. If the shutters were open you would see the sky where the rooms ought to be."

At the other corner of the street used to stand the Albergo di Francia, where I stayed once when all the other hotels were full because the wind was so strong that the ferry-boat could not get out of the harbour to take the travellers across the straits. The albergo was lying in a heap on the ground ; in its fall it had crushed and killed and buried the young landlord, Michele ;—" God rest his soul in heaven, so merry ! "

I uttered some banality about their having passed through a terrible time. They accepted my remark as a final summing up and said it was better not to talk about it. It was evidently a relief to them to talk of something else.

Before Messina can be rebuilt on its old site, the ruins must be cleared away and the disputes about the boundaries must be settled, and this will take time. Meanwhile the people are living in the wooden bungalows of a New Messina which is growing up outside the old town. I spent two days there in the spring of 1910 and again in 1911. The Viale San Martino is the principal street. There are hotels, bookshops, sweet-shops, tobacconists, jewellers, butchers, restaurants with tables ready spread, and the lottery offices are open. Most of the huts have no upper storey and some are no bigger than half a dozen sentry boxes knocked into one. It is very dusty. The boys are crying papers up and down the street, there are barbers' saloni and shops with silver-topped canes. The earthquake

seems to be forgotten in the intensity of the bubbling life. As I passed the Municipio in a side street, I saw a wedding party going in. One evening I went to the theatre and saw *Feudalismo* with Giovanni Grasso, a homonymous cousin of the great Giovanni, in the principal part and Turiddu's mother, Signora Balistrieri, as one of the women.

The first time I was in Messina after the earthquake all this was only beginning and many of the people were living in railway waggons in the sidings, of which few now remain. It was strange to see rows of railway carriages with curtains to the windows and some with steps up to the door and a little terrace outside with creepers growing over it. The cabins and the waggons are supposed to be safe, because they would not crush their tenants in another earthquake. But they do not seriously fear another earthquake; Messina has been so thoroughly destroyed that it must now be the turn of some other town.

I replied: "Yes, the Veil of S. Agata preserved Catania this time, but it may desert her next time as the Letter of the Madonna deserted you last winter. By the by, what has become of that miraculous Letter? Was it destroyed or did anyone save it?"

They did not know and muttered something about "stupidagini," and perhaps there will be no need to trouble oneself with any such thoughts when one is living the life after death. Later on, in another part of the island, I asked a dignitary of the Church, who had not been through the earthquake, what had become of the Madonna's Letter and he assured me that it had been preserved. I had pretty well made up my mind that this would be his answer before putting the question; but if the earthquake had destroyed Girgenti and I had asked him about the letter from the Devil, which is said to be preserved in the cathedral there, I should have expected him to tell me that that letter had not survived the shock.

GIUSEPPE PLATANIA

In Catania I saw my friend Lieutenant Giuseppe Platania, who was quartered in Messina during the winter of 1908–9. He was away for Christmas and returned about midnight on the 27th December and went to bed at two in the morning on the 28th. He was awakened by the falling of a picture, which hit him. He guessed the reason, covered his head with the pillows and lay still, waiting. He had to wait fifty-seven seconds—at least many people told me the earthquake lasted fifty-seven seconds, but the recording instruments were broken, so it is not certain how long it lasted. When the room left off rocking, Giuseppe put out his hand for the match-box, but the table was no longer by his bedside. He heard cries for help, and a man who was sleeping in the next room came with a light, then he saw that the floor of his room had fallen, but not under his bed, which was in a corner. He and the man with the light managed to get to the window and let themselves down into a side street, but they saw no way out because the exit was closed by the fallen houses. Their window was on the first floor and they climbed back into the house, helped another man who was there, got themselves some clothes and returned into the side street. Here they felt no better off and were afraid of the houses falling on them, but Giuseppe's soldier servant, Giulio Giuli, a contadino of Nocera, appeared among them. He had come to look for his master and crept through the ruins into the side street. He told them that Messina was destroyed, which they would not believe ; everyone seems to have supposed at first that the earthquake had only damaged his own house. Giulio showed them the way out, and so they got into the town and realised the extent of the disaster. If Giulio had not come, Giuseppe and his friends would probably have been destroyed by more houses falling into their narrow street before they could have found a way out.

Giuseppe had changed his bedroom about ten days

previously. The house he used to live in was completely destroyed, he showed me a photograph of its ruins. His mother and his brother Giovanni, in Catania, heard of the disaster, but could get no particulars because communication was broken. Giovanni went to Messina to inquire for his brother, not knowing where his new room was, but he knew the number of his regiment. He stopped a soldier in the street who was wearing the number in his cap and who told him where to find Giuseppe. In the meantime Giulio had walked about fifteen miles to Alì, whence he took the train to Catania, told the mother her son was safe, and returned to Messina to help in the work of rescuing victims.

Giuseppe directed his soldiers in the rescue work and afterwards received a medal " Per speciali benemerenze." While at work they saw a hand among the ruins and began to dig round it, all the time in fear lest the disturbing of the rubbish might make matters worse for the victim and for themselves. The hand belonged to a woman whose head had been protected by being under a wooden staircase. She showed no sign of life and it was already four days since the disaster. They wetted her lips with marsala and poured some into her mouth and thus restored her. Giuseppe told me that nothing made more impression on him than seeing this woman's breast begin to heave as life returned.

The soldiers had to shoot the horses and dogs for eating the corpses, and the thieves for pilfering. The horses had escaped from their stables, which were broken by the earthquake, and the dogs had come in from the country. And besides the pilfering they told me of other things the doing of which had better be ignored by those who seriously cultivate the belief that civilisation and education have already so transformed human nature that all restraints may be safely removed, things which, nevertheless, were done by human beings in Messina while the houses were tottering during the closing days of 1908 and the opening weeks of 1909. I inquired whether the townspeople were themselves

guilty of these horrors and they said : No. The bad things were done by people who came into the city from the country, like the dogs, and across the straits from Calabria to take advantage of the catastrophe. As my friend Peppino Fazio in Catania put it :

" The earthquake was very judiciously managed ; it killed only the wicked townspeople ; it did not touch the good ones, they all escaped."

Giuseppe's brother, Giovanni Platania, is a scientific man and a professor ; he went often from Catania to Messina during the early part of 1909 to study the behaviour of the sea during the earthquake—the maremoto. He has embodied the results of his researches in an opuscolo on the subject *Il Maremoto dello Stretto di Messina del* 28 *Dicembre* 1908 (Modena. Società Tipografica Modenese, 1909). It took him twelve hours to return to Catania from one of his first visits ; the journey in ordinary times is performed by the express in two hours and a half. There was no charge for the tickets because it was the policy of the authorities to empty the town ; in this way malefactors who escaped from the prison got easily away. In the train was a woman who talked, saying that no one could blame her for travelling to Catania free, especially as she had not deserved to be put in prison—she had been put there for nothing. There was also a man who did not exactly say he was a thief, but he informed his fellow-travellers that the bundle he had with him had been confided to his care by the padrone of his house. There was no reason why he should have told them this, no one had asked him about his bundle, and Giovanni drew his own conclusions.

GIULIO ADAMO

In Trapani I talked with another friend, a doctor, Giulio Adamo of Calatafimi. Communication was broken and it was not until the evening of the 29th that they began to

know in Trapani that there had been an earthquake in Messina. Giulio went with others by train to Milazzo and the train could go no further. They continued the journey by boat from Milazzo to Messina, where he arrived on the 30th. When they approached the city and saw the row of houses facing the harbour where the Albergo Trinacria was, they thought the disaster could not have been so very great. But it was only the facciata that was standing, the houses behind were down. There was great disorder, heaps of bodies, no water to drink because the pipes were broken, and for the three days Giulio was there they only had bread from Palermo and the oranges which were in the railway-waggons.

CECÈ LUNA

In Palermo I talked with another doctor, Cecè (Francesco) Luna, of Trapani, whose acquaintance I made many years ago on Monte Erice when he was there as a student in villeggiatura. In September, 1909, I found him in the children's hospital at Palermo. As soon as news of the earthquake reached the city, the *Regina Margherita* was fitted out to help the wounded and Cecè went in her among the doctors. When they arrived at Messina, they could neither enter the harbour nor take anyone on board because they had to obey orders. It was raining, the sea was rough and covered with little boats full of fugitives, some unhurt, some wounded. One boat contained a young man holding an umbrella over his mother, who was wounded and lying on two tables.

"I am strong. I can wait seven or eight days without food, it is not for me, it is for my mother."

He cried and prayed till the orders came and she was taken on board.

Cecè, who was put in charge of the taking on board of the fugitives, ordered that the wounded were to be taken

first. He was somewhat surprised that this order was attended to ; it was so, however, the wounded were taken in without confusion ; but afterwards among the unwounded there was confusion. There was a boy who tried to get on board first, Cecè pulled the boy's cap off and threw it away, intending it to fall in the sea, but it fell in another boat and the boy went after his cap and gave no more trouble.

The earthquake was at about 5.20 a.m. on 28th December ; the *Regina Margherita* arrived at Messina at 8 a.m. on the 30th December. As soon as Cecè landed, he began searching with others and at 10 a.m. found, in a well-furnished house, a woman dead in bed, killed by a beam which had fallen across her. Under the beam, close to her body, lay a baby girl, very dirty but alive and untouched. It was impossible to say precisely when the child had been born, but certainly only a few hours before the earthquake, just time enough for the midwife to leave the house, for they found no trace of her. Cecè took the baby to the steamer and gave it sugar and water, and when they returned to Palermo they got it a wet-nurse and it was baptised Maria in the children's hospital. If one has an earthquake in one's horoscope, surely it could not be placed at a less inconvenient part of one's life. New-born babies can live three or four days without food ; but if this child had not been born before the earthquake, she would not have been born at all, and if she had been born earlier, she would have died of starvation or exposure before she was found. As it happened she was sheltered and her life preserved by the beam which killed her mother. Maria was adopted by a lady of Palermo, and in April, 1910, Cecè told me he had lately seen her and she was beginning to walk.

Cecè had had twenty earthquake babies in his hospital, all with fathers and mothers unknown, and, of course, other hospitals were equally full. When I was at Palermo in 1909 he had only seven of the twenty, the rest having been taken away, some by their fathers and mothers, others by

people who adopted them. Travelling back to England I saw in the railway stations at Rome, Milan, and other places, frames of photographs of unclaimed babies put up in the hope that they might be recognised by chance travellers.

The *Regina Margherita* stayed at Messina one day, loading, and then returned to Palermo with five hundred unwounded and eighty-two wounded. Cecè remained in Messina, searching, but joined the ship when she returned to Messina, where she took up her station in port as a floating hospital.

He told me of a woman who was in the ruins, alive but unable to move. Her daughter lay dead beside her. It was raining, there was a dripping and she was getting wet. With the morning light she saw it was not the rain that was wetting her, but the blood of her husband and two grown-up sons who were dead in the room above.

He told me of a law-student in Palermo, twenty-four years old, engaged to a young lady who lived in Messina ; this young man went to pass his Christmas holidays with his betrothed. He was not in the same house and the earthquake did him no harm ; as soon as it was over his first thought was for his fidanzata. He got into the street and made for her house, paying no attention to the cries that issued from the ruins. But, like a wandering knight on his way to assist his lady and embarrassed by meeting other adventures, he was stopped and forced to help in searching a particular house, from which he extricated a beautiful girl, nineteen years of age, unhurt. She would not let him go till he had saved her mother. All the others in the house were killed. Still the girl would not let him go.

" Are you rich ? " she asked.

" No."

" Then take this ring and tell me who you are."

He took the ring and after giving her all the information she required was allowed to proceed. When he came to the

house of his betrothed he found that she and all her family had perished. He returned to Palermo weeping.

Two months later he received a letter:

I asked if you were rich; you replied "No" and I gave you my ring. You saved my mother and you saved me. My mother has since died from the effects of the shock. If you are free I am ready to marry you and I have money enough for both.

On this they became engaged and after a suitable time intend to marry. Cecè wanted to apologise for the conventionality of this story, but I begged him not to trouble; if unassisted nature were to be always original, the occupation of poets and romancers would be gone.

In one house was a servant, a Roman woman; she was devoted to a young lady of the family and all the family were buried in the ruins, but the Roman servant was unhurt. She could get no help, the house was on the outskirts of the city and such passers-by as there were would not stop. She set to work searching for her young mistress and incidentally saved the whole family. It took her twenty-four hours; they were all wounded and her young mistress was the last she found.

A woman kept a small shop opposite another shop kept by a man who sold coal. The woman had saved money and the carbonajo knew she had her money in her house. He entered the woman's house after the earthquake, accompanied by another malefactor. The woman's daughter was killed, but the woman was under the ruins alive and they pulled her out. She exclaimed:

"I do not know you."

But she did know the carbonajo quite well, or at least well enough to know he was a bad man and to suspect his intention. They asked her where her money was concealed. She only repeated:

"I do not know you."

They believed her, thinking she was confused by the shock of the earthquake; this was what she intended,

otherwise she feared they would have killed her. They threatened her, and at last she told them where the money was, still protesting that she did not know them. They took her money and then, being afraid she might give the alarm and they might be caught before they could escape, they pinned her down with a large piece of the ruins on her left arm and departed, taking the risk of her being rescued later and saying she had been robbed by unknown men. She was rescued and brought to Palermo. In the hospital she begged Cecè to put an end to her :

" What is the use of living ? My daughter is dead, my arm is gangrened, my money is stolen. Let me die and have done with it."

Cecè did not kill her, he chloroformed her and amputated her arm. She gave information about the carbonajo, who was arrested in Messina. His accomplice escaped, but the woman got back her money and thanked Cecè for amputating her arm instead of killing her.

FUGITIVES AND VICTIMS

At Caltanissetta they told me that the trains were bringing fugitives from Messina all day and all night. The fugitives were mostly naked and all very dirty, some with rugs, some with cloaks, some with rags. A woman got out of the train clothed, like Monna Vanna, in nothing but a cloak which a soldier had given her. They asked her :

" What do you want done for you ? "

She opened her cloak and showed that she wanted everything.

Another woman came with her daughter whose leg was broken and they were both naked. The doctor said to the mother :

" And what do you want ? "

" Help for my daughter."

To another destitute woman : " And you ? "

" Shoes for my baby."

Michele, a young man, was known to be in Reggio where he was employed in the Municipio. His father went from Caltanissetta to look for him and returned after four days, during which he had searched for his son and suffered mental anguish and physical discomfort. His friends went to the station to meet him. He talked politics to them and asked their opinion about the rotation of crops.

" And Michele ? " they inquired.

" Oh ! Michele," here he began to laugh : " Michele ; yes, he is buried under the ruins of a house three storeys high."

They could get nothing more out of him except laughter and that Michele was lying under a house three storeys high. A few months later, Michele's body was found, with no traces of decay, brought to Caltanissetta and buried. Then his friends wrote elegies in verse about him and handed them round for approval.

Plenty of people went mad besides Michele's father. The streets of Messina were full of mad people. They told me of one who lost his wife. Within a fortnight he married a widow whose husband had been destroyed. This happy couple spent their honeymoon in digging out the bodies of their previous spouses and having them suitably buried.

When I say they married, a widow may not legally marry for ten months after the death of her husband, but this couple married on credit, as they call it. There were many fugitives who found a temporary asylum in a prison in Catania and who similarly married on credit, intending to return later and contribute to the population of the new Messina.

There was a family living on the top floor of a house close to the railway station near the port in Reggio. They were not hurt, but they could not get down because the earthquake had destroyed the stairs. The man made a rope of sheets, with the help of which he carried his wife down, then he went up and fetched his children one after

another, three or four children. He went up again to fetch his money and while in his room the house fell with him, killing and burying him in the ruins. But he had saved his wife and children.

They told me of a victim, pinned down in a cellar, unable to rise; a chicken, whose coop had been broken, escaped and passed near; the victim caught the chicken, killed it, plucked it and ate it raw. They told me of others, not pinned down but imprisoned in rooms, who ate what they found in cupboards—oil, biscuits, salame, uncooked maccaroni. These victims were saved and lived to recount their sufferings. But there were others, pinned down and imprisoned, whose bodies were not extricated till they had lain for weeks and months beside their emptied cupboards, no longer on the watch for escaping chickens. I was in Catania about a year and a half after the earthquake and saw the funeral of one whose body had recently been found; it was not the last.

THE SLOPES OF ETNA

CHAPTER XVIII

LAVA

We started from Catania at three o'clock on a dull afternoon at the end of March to see one of the streams of lava that Etna was sending out during the eruption of 1910. Peppino Di Gregorio had arranged everything and provided four of his friends to make company for us and to act as guides, some of them having been before. He and I went in a one-horse carriage with two of the friends and the other two came on their bicycles. There was, first, another Peppino who had been in America, where he earned his living by making cigars. He had forgotten how it was done and, besides, it required special tools, so he could not have shown me even if he had remembered. Since his return home to Catania he has been employed by the municipio. He begged me to call him not Peppino but Joe, because he would be so English. Then there was Ninu, also employed by the municipio, a great bullock of a fellow bursting with health, whose legs were too short for him and his smile a dream of romance. The other two were Alessandro, about whom I got no information, and a grave brigadier of the Guardia Municipale.

The road took us up-hill among villas and between walls enclosing fields of volcanic soil, very fertile, and occasionally a recent eruption had buried the fertility under fresh lava, hard and black, on which nothing will grow for years.

Patrick Brydone went to Sicily in 1770, and wrote an account of his journey: *A Tour through Sicily and Malta in a Series of Letters to William Beckford, Esquire, of Somerly, in Suffolk, from Patrick Brydone, F.R.S.* Near

Catania he saw some lava covered with a scanty soil, incapable of producing either corn or vines ; he imagined from its barrenness that it

had run from the mountain only a few ages ago ; but was surprised to be informed by Signor Recupero, the historiographer of Etna, that this very lava is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus to have burst from Etna in the time of the second Punic war, when Syracuse was besieged by the Romans.

It seems that the stream ran from Etna to the sea, and cut off the passage of a detachment of soldiers who were on their way from Taormina to the relief of the besieged, and Diodorus took his authority from inscriptions on Roman monuments found on the lava itself. So that after about 2000 years this lava had scarcely begun to be fertile. Afterwards Recupero, who was a canonico, "an ingenious ecclesiastic of this place," told Brydone of a pit sunk near Jaci, where they had pierced through seven parallel surfaces of lava, most of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth.

Now, says he [Recupero], the eruption which formed the lowest of these lavas, if we may be allowed to reason from analogy, must have flowed from the mountain at least 14,000 years ago. Recupero tells me, he is exceedingly embarrassed by these discoveries in writing the history of the mountain.—That Moses hangs like a dead weight on him, and blunts all his zeal for enquiry ; for that really he has not the conscience to make his mountain so young as that prophet makes the world.—What do you think of these sentiments from a Roman Catholic divine ?—The bishop, who is strenuously orthodox—for it is an excellent see—has already warned him to be upon his guard, and not to pretend to be a better natural historian than Moses ; nor to presume to urge anything that may in the smallest degree be deemed contradictory to his sacred authority. . . .

The lava, being a very porous substance, easily catches the dust that is carried about by the wind ; which, at first I observe, only yields a kind of moss ; this rotting, and by degrees increasing the soil, some small meagre vegetables are

next produced; which rotting in their turn, are likewise converted into soil. But this process, I suppose, is often greatly accelerated by showers of ashes from the mountain, as I have observed in some places the richest soil, to the depth of five or six feet and upwards; and still below that, nothing but rocks of lava. It is in these spots that the trees arrive at such an immense size. Their roots shoot into the crevices of the lava, and lay such hold of it, that there is no instance of the winds tearing them up; though there are many of its breaking off their longest branches.

We passed several villages, and on one of the churches there was a group of three saints—S. Alfio, the padrone of the district, and his two brothers. I had never heard of S. Alfio, who they told me was a physician and lived in the third century; one of his brothers, S. Filiberto (whom the people call S. Liberto), was a surgeon, and his other brother, S. Cirino, was a chemist. They performed miracles, endured persecution, and were finally martyred for the faith in this way: First they had their three tongues cut out, then they were put into a saucepan such as the maccaroni is boiled in, only larger—large enough to hold three saints—and full of boiling oil: the saucepan was placed on a fire and they were cooked in it. Their bodies were afterwards burnt on a gridiron. This took place out of doors opposite a tavern, and three men, who had come to the tavern to drink, saw it all done. Having seen it, they went to sleep for three hundred years; then they woke up and wanted to pay for their drinks with the money they had in their pockets, which was money made of leather.

"What is this?" asked the landlord.

"It is money," they replied.

"It is no use," said the landlord. While they had been asleep that kind of money had gone out of circulation.

"It is good money," they insisted.

"It is not money at all, it is only a piece of leather."

"It was money yesterday evening," said the spokesman, "when I saw Alfio, Cirino, and Liberto being martyred."

This is how the martyrdon of the three saints is repre-

sented on carts belonging to those spiritually-minded owners who prefer the Story of S. Alfio to the Story of the Paladins. It seemed to me that the painter had been suspiciously obsessed by the number Three ; it was in the third century, there were three saints, they were each martyred three times over, though they cannot have known much about the boiling or the grilling, and there were three drunkards who went to sleep for three centuries. But I said nothing. I thought I would wait till I could see a cart.

By this time we had reached Nicolosi, that is we had nearly traversed the first of the three zones into which the Slopes of Etna are divided. This lowest one is the Regione Piemontese and Nicolosi is about 2250 feet above the sea—the place from which tourists often start to make the ascent of the volcano. Here we spent a declamatory half-hour discussing where we should eat the provisions we had brought from Catania and drink the wine we had bought at Mascalucia on the way. The discussion ended by our being received in a peasant's hut, where we spread a table for ourselves and the woman stood a low paraffin lamp in the middle of the cloth. This is a bad plan, the light dazzles one for seeing those sitting opposite and their shadows are thrown big and black on the wall and ceiling so that one cannot see the room, but I should say it was like Orlando's bedroom in the contadino's cottage on Ricuzzu's cart, the only room in the house, poorly furnished and used for all purposes. The woman of the hut had a baby in her arms and I said to Ninu :

" I wonder whether I may look at the baby ? "

" Of course you may," he replied, " why not ? "

So I asked the woman, who smiled proudly and gave me the baby at once. She called it Turi (Salvatore) and said it was three weeks old. It was asleep and I nursed it till the table was ready, which was not long, for everything was cold. I handed Turi back to his mother and sat down, with Joe on one side of me and Ninu on the other. Pre-

sently Ninu inquired why I had asked whether I might look at the baby. I replied that I had heard that Sicilian peasants are so superstitious they do not like strangers to look at their babies for fear of the evil eye ; I admitted that I had never yet met with a peasant so superstitious as to refuse to show me her baby, but on the Slopes of Etna, during an eruption, I had thought it wise to be careful.

Ninu, in the Sicilian manner, was about to say that anyone could tell by my appearance that there was nothing to fear from me, when Joe interrupted him :

" She is an intelligent woman," said Joe.

I said : " I suppose you mean that she throws her intelligence into the scale with her maternal pride, and together they overbalance any little superstition which the proximity of the volcano may have fostered."

" That's the way to put it," he replied.

" Why do people talk so much about the evil eye ? Do they think it is picturesque, or do they really believe in it ? "

Joe considered for a moment. Then he said : " Sometimes a peasant may decline to hand over her baby because she thinks the stranger looks clumsy and is likely to drop it ; it would be rude to let him suspect this, so she allows him to think she has a superstitious reason. And some of her neighbours believe—at least—well, what do you mean by believing ? What is faith ? "

" I'm sure I don't know. Sometimes one thing, sometimes another. It is a difficult question."

" Perhaps it is that she believes that her neighbours believe," said Joe,tentatively.

" That is not the faith of S. Alfio and his brothers, that is not the faith that wins a martyr's crown or that removes mountains."

" No, but it has its reward if it enables the believer to feel that he is not singular, it is comfortable to feel that one thinks as one's neighbours think."

I said : " Thou art a happy man, Poins, to think as other men think."

"I do not know anyone called Poins," said Joe, "it is not a Sicilian name; but to think as other men think is as comfortable as a crown of martyrdom, and if it can be won without any martyrdom worth speaking of—why, so much the better."

I agreed, and went on: "And then there are the men who never think of religion or theology, but go to Mass to please their wives."

"Plenty of them," he said, "and by pleasing their wives they reap the reward of avoiding domestic friction, whereby they perform a miracle greater than removing Etna."

I thought of my poor mother who used to say:

"But, my dear, if you never go to church what hold have you over the servants?"

At the time, I remember, I pigeon-holed her problem among others that are still awaiting solution, and she died before I realised how well she had translated into the language of modern Bayswater the "Paris vaut bien une Messe" of Henri Quatre.

"If you want to see faith," said Peppino Di Gregorio, "why don't you stay and go to the festa of S. Alfio at Trecastagne? You might even see a miracle there."

It seems that when anyone is in hospital with a broken leg after an accident or suffering from any illness, especially hernia, he cries in his despair, making use of this form:

"O, S. Alfio! cure me of this illness, restore my broken leg or cure my hernia" (or as may be) "and for the love of my wife, of my children, of my mother" (or as may be) "I will run naked to Trecastagne and light a candle before your shrine."

After making this vow, the patient recovers and then he must not fail. With any other saint there may be failure, but not with S. Alfio, for he is more powerful than the Madonna or than the Padre Eterno or than the Redeemer. He is the Padrone and performs miracles.

"But how long should I have to stay? When is this festa?"

It would not be till the 10th of May, nearly six weeks ahead, and that made it a matter requiring consideration and, as it was now half-past seven and dark, we had to leave off talking and start for the lava.

Those of our friends who had made the excursion before were delightful as company, but we hardly wanted them as guides, because the way was shown by hundreds of people who were returning, many of them carrying torches, and we only had to walk in the opposite direction. We also carried a light—the acetylene lamp off Ninu's bicycle, and it functioned as inefficiently as the bull's-eye lantern which Mr. Pickwick took with him on his nocturnal expedition at Clifton. The road was broad enough, but strewn with big lumps of lava lying half-hidden in lava sand. I stumbled frequently, but I never fell, because one of my friends was always at my elbow and caught me; either it was the brave brigadier or Alessandro or Joe or the other Peppino or that great hulking Ninu with his operatic smile lighted up by his fitful lamp. They took care of me all the way until, after about an hour, we turned into a vineyard, called the Contrada Fra Diavolo, and our progress was stopped by a sloping embankment over twenty feet high.

This was the broad nose of the stream of lava. It was coming towards us at about eighty feet an hour, but its velocity varies according to the slope of the ground and the cooling and consistency of the material. The course of the stream described a curve from the mouth to the place where we stood, and the width of it gradually increased until opposite us it was about a quarter of a mile broad. There was plenty of smoke, fiery with the light reflected from the glowing stream, and especially thick in the direction of the mouth. The lava was sluggish, viscous, heavy stuff, full of bubbles, pushing itself along and kneading itself like dough. Red-hot boulders and shapeless lumps

of all manner of sizes were continually losing their balance and rolling lazily down the slope towards us ; as they rolled they disengaged little avalanches of rapid sparks, and when they reached the ground they sometimes fell against a vine stump and set it in a blaze for a moment. They said that this is Etna's cunning way of taking a glass of wine ; he opens a mouth and consumes a vineyard. All the time there was a roaring noise like coals being thrown on the fire, only much louder, and the great sloping wall glowed in the places where open crevasses left by the crumbling blocks had stirred it. It was too hot for us to go very near, nevertheless, my companions were not content to leave without bringing some pieces of lava away. They went towards it with canes which the vines will not want this year, unless the stream stops before it has broadened over the contrada, and with much difficulty and scorching, manipulated bits of red-hot lava until they had got them far enough away to deal with them, and then, balancing them on the end of two canes, they brought them to where I was resting near a doomed hut.

After spending an hour, fascinated by the spectacle, we returned by the sandy, rocky road to Nicolosi. While the carriage was being got ready, I said to Joe :

" You know, if I lived on the Slopes of Etna, close to such a sight as we have been contemplating, I think I should believe in the evil eye and S. Alfio and everything else."

He assured me that it would not have any such effect unless, perhaps, during the periods of actual eruption—as soon as the eruption was over I should forget all about it.

" Do we not all live on the slopes of volcanoes ? " asked Joe. " An eruption cannot do more than ruin you or kill you. And without coming to live on the Slopes of Etna you might be ruined or die at any moment. How do you know that you have not now in you the seeds of some fatal disease that will declare itself before you return home ? Or you may be run over in the street or killed in a railway

accident any day. And as for ruin, next time you look into an English newspaper you may see that all your investments have left off paying dividends and have gone down to an unsaleable price. Perhaps at this moment, in some Foreign Office, a despatch is being drafted that will lead to a declaration of war and the ruin of England and you with it. And yet you never worry about all this."

"Then perhaps I had better begin to believe in S. Alfio at once?"

"Especially if you are threatened with hernia."

"You said something about hernia before. What has hernia to do with it?" I inquired.

"S. Alfio's first miracle was to cure one of his brothers of that complaint, which he had contracted while carrying a beam."

"But was not S. Alfio a medical man? Why do you call it a miracle when a medical man cures his patient? Have you been reading the plays of Molière?"

"Who is Molière?" asked one of them. "Did he write his plays in the Catanian dialect?"

It does not do to make these allusions when talking with Sicilians who are employed in the municipio. One might as well quote *Candide* to some young schoolmaster who thinks the only thing worth knowing is the date of the Battle of Salamis. So I returned to S. Alfio and asked whether he always answers all prayers; they said the people believe he does or they hope he will. One of them, thinking I was inclined to scoff, rebuked me, saying:

"If you had been to Trecastagne and seen what I have seen, you would believe. I saw in the church there a dumb man. He tried to shout 'Viva S. Alfio,' but could only make inarticulate noises. The people encouraged him, and he went on trying till at last he said the words distinctly. I heard him say them. You are making a mistake in not going to Trecastagne. You might also behold a miracle and then you would believe as I do."

I thought of Géronte when his daughter recovers her

speech in *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* and wanted to ask how long this dumb man retained his miraculous power and whether his relations and friends were pleased about it and whether, after the novelty had worn off, they continued shouting "Viva S. Alfio."' But I said nothing; I was afraid of confirming them in the notion that I was scoffing, whereas I was very much impressed; the influence of the stream of lava was still upon me and all that Joe had said about living on the slopes of volcanoes. And I was wondering whether I could manage to be back in Catania for the 10th of May and see the people running naked to Trecastagne. I was not anxious to go there myself, not because I should have had to run naked all the thirteen kilometres, they would have let me wear my clothes and drive in a painted cart, but because there is no albergo there and it would have meant being up all night. If S. Alfio had earned his reputation by restoring those who spend sleepless nights in the street, I might have given him a chance of exercising his power on me.

There is generally some way of doing anything one really wants to do, and by the time we were separating in Catania, at one o'clock in the morning I was promising to try to return in time for the Festa di S. Alfio.

CHAPTER XIX

S. ALFIO

I WAS back in Catania before the 9th of May and began talking about S. Alfio in the Teatro Machiavelli. One of the actors whose name is Volpes, the one who did the listening father in the play about Rosina and the good young man, is employed by day in the cathedral, his department being the brass-work; he is therefore something of a hagiologist. He was going on business to Lentini, which is situated to the south of Catania on the way to

Siracusa, it is the place where the three saintly brothers were martyred, and there he bought for me a book—*Storia dei Martiri e della Chiesa di Lentini*, by Sebastiano Pisano Baudo (Lentini : Giuseppe Saluta, 1898)—from which I have collected particulars for this story of the Life of S. Alfio.

Towards the end of the first half of the third century after Christ, at Prefetta in Gascony, the wealthy and noble Prince Vitale lived a life of singular piety, united in matrimony to Benedetta di Locusta. Heaven had blessed them with three sons, Alfio born in 230, Filiberto born one year and eight months later and Cirino born one year and four months later again. Prefetta was not only in Gascony, it was also in Aquitaine, and, notwithstanding this, it was in Spain and also in the Abruzzi, which is a region of Italy between Naples and Taranto, if I understand correctly. Owing to its unsettled habits geographers do not mark it on the maps, but they and the historians are agreed that it certainly existed, and perhaps it exists still, if only in a Castellinarian sense. The interesting point is that it was the birthplace of S. Alfio.

The noble and saintly Benedetta, having been brought up in the school of sacrifice, ardently desired to die for the faith. Her husband placed no obstacle in her way. She obtained an interview with the prefect, abused his gods and awaited the sentence which took the form of decapitation.

Prince Vitale after the death of his wife was free to consecrate himself to the education of his three sons. I expected to find that he had them taught medicine, surgery and chemistry, but there is not a word about any of these subjects. Evodio di Bisanzio, flying from country to country to avoid the persecution of Massimino, happened upon Prefetta ; he was welcomed by Vitale, who appointed him tutor of his boys. Evodio was learned in the sacred sciences, the Greek fables and how to live rightly. These were the subjects which he taught to his pupils. Alfio copied out the Books of the Prophets, Filiberto the Gospels

and Cirino the Letters of S. Paul and the Acts of the Apostles. Thus they developed a manly spirit, angelic habits and an intelligence, a piety, a devotion which are the rare gifts of a few privileged souls.

Onesimo was their next tutor, a man of deep learning and a fervent missionary who came to Prefetta with a following of thirteen or fourteen disciples and boarded and lodged with Prince Vitale. He was more the kind of tutor Vitale wanted for his boys. Onesimo had no sympathy with flying from persecution ; he took the view that it was not enough to copy the sacred Books, his pupils must know how to sacrifice their frail bodies for the glory of the Cross. He instructed them in the practical work of martyrdom.

In the year 249, Decio ascended the imperial throne and issued an edict against the Christians. Vitale and Onesimo heard of it and welcomed this opportunity for the three brothers who swore on the ashes of their mother that they would profit by it. They did not have to wait long. Nigellione, the imperial minister, came to execute the decree. Onesimo and his pupils, in spite of tortures, professed their unalterable faith in the Cross and were sent to Rome together with fourteen other Christians. Vitale, being thus freed from all family responsibilities, exiled himself with his friends and awaited his end in a sacred retreat so retired that our author does not specify it.

In Rome, Onesimo and his band of Christians suffered tortures. While in prison S. Peter and S. Paul appeared to them, healed their wounds, exhorted them to persevere and promised ultimate victory. On the seventh day they were taken before Valeriano, the imperial minister. Failing, as Nigellione had failed, to shake their faith, he sent them with a letter to Diomede, Prince of Pozzuoli, telling him that if he could not win the captives over from their new faith he was to put to death Onesimo and the fourteen disciples by means of fierce tortures, and to send Alfio, Filiberto and Cirino into Sicily to be dealt with according

to instructions contained in another letter addressed to the crafty Tertullo, Governor of Sicily, at Lentini.

Diomede carried out his instructions. The Christians all refused to sacrifice to the false gods. Onesimo died in consequence of an unusually large stone being placed upon his chest, the fourteen disciples were decapitated and Alfio, Filiberto and Cirino were handed over to fifty soldiers under Captain Silvano, a man of a proud and cruel nature, and taken in a ship to Messina.

The voyage occupied three days; they reposed in Messina for two hours and then, chained together and barefooted, proceeded to Taormina, where Tertullo happened to be hunting for Christians, and to him Captain Silvano delivered the letter from Valeriano. Tertullo's instructions were to make the most of his attractive appearance and his agreeable manners and by means of cajolery to persuade the three holy brethren to sacrifice to the gods of Rome; in case of failure he was to cause them to suffer many and various tortures and then to deprive them of their lives.

Tertullo concocted a scheme worthy of the devil. No sooner were the youths brought into his presence than he assumed the appearance of an affectionate father, embraced them and inquired sympathetically about their parents and their home. On their telling him they were Christians he endeavoured, with apparent kindness, to turn them from a faith which had brought them nothing but suffering. He promised that if they would sacrifice to the gods of Rome they should enjoy the pleasures of a court life. But there was none of the *Paris vaut bien une Messe* about the sons of the saintly Benedetta. They spurned his promises and continued to declare themselves firm believers in the true Cross. Tertullo, defeated and angry, thereupon showed himself in his true colours; he dropped the affectionate parent and ordered the brothers to be tortured. He then sent them with Captain Mercurio and a squadron of forty soldiers to Lentini to await his return to that city.

At Mascali they were fatigued, especially Filiberto, who almost succumbed. They prayed to the Omnipotent and, before they had risen from their knees, the azure heavens became obscured, the wind blew, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed and there was a great rain. The forty soldiers fell upon their faces, frightened nearly to death, and in the tempest onward came a venerable man, believed by all who saw him to be S. Andrea. This personage restored the youths ; whereupon the rain ceased, the clouds dispersed, the heavens smiled again and the forty soldiers rose from the ground declaring that the God worshipped by their prisoners must be more powerful than they had supposed.

In those days the usual road from Taormina to Lentini passed along by the seashore, but Captain Mercurio took the three brothers by an inland route passing through Trecastagni, perhaps because the road by the shore was encumbered with lava from an eruption of Etna which occurred in the year 251 or 252. When I came to this I thought of Diodorus Siculus and the second Punic war, but I repressed the suspicion that the compiler of the story was consciously borrowing a bit of local colour in order to get S. Alfio to Trecastagni in a picturesque manner.

It was the end of August or the beginning of September in the year 252 when the three saints reached Trecastagni. Here they sat on a rock which diversified the uniformity of the landscape, partook of food and reposed. Exhilarated by a laughing sky of rarest beauty, the holy brethren unloosed their tongues and sang hymns of joy and praise to the Lord for that he had given them the strength and spirit to face their anticipated martyrdom. On the spot where they reposed now stands the parish church of Trecastagni.

The three saints proceeded to Catania, where they passed an uncomfortable night singing hymns in an obscure prison, and at daybreak were taken on towards Lentini.

The river Simeto was in flood owing to the recent abundant rain, which is perhaps a reference to the storm at

Mascali ; as soon as the saints put their feet in the stream it shrank and they passed over. Eight of the soldiers attempted to follow in their footsteps, but a sudden rush of water engulfed them together with their horses ; this danger caused the remaining thirty-two soldiers to stay where they were, and they patiently waited four days till they were fetched by their comrades who, I suppose, had got over the river and employed the time in drying their uniforms and recovering from their wetting, but at first I feared they had been drowned.

Eight hundred paces to the north of Lentini the glorious brothers met a young man of the Jewish religion who had eaten nothing for a month. Captain Mercurio, having seen and been much touched by the portents performed by his prisoners during the journey, begged them to restore the youth. Immediately, with no assistance from anyone, the saints broke the ropes that bound them, prayed to heaven, approached the sufferer, infused new life into his exhausted frame and restored him to perfect health. The youth and his parents confessed their faith in the Nazarene, Captain Mercurio also declared himself converted and twenty of the soldiers, dismounting from their horses, threw their arms on the ground and prayed to be bound with chains since they now abhorred the false pagan gods and intended for the future to worship only the God of the three brothers.

They entered Lentini on Wednesday the 3rd of September, 252, their hands bound behind them, their heads uncovered and their feet bare, presenting to the emotional crowd an appearance of great nobility. They were put in prison with the twenty converted soldiers, tortured and starved ; but a venerable man girdled with grace and celestial light miraculously brought food to them, embraced them and blessed them, their wounds were healed, their strength was restored, their courage was reinforced. Their tortures were increased after this, and so it went on till the 10th of May, 253, when S. Alfio was killed by having his

tongue pulled out, S. Filiberto was burnt on a gridiron and S. Cirino was boiled in pitch and bitumen.

Eight years later, in June, 261, Vitale in his retirement was cheered by a visit from Neofito and Aquila, who brought to him, as tokens of the martyrdom of his three sons, the mantle of Alfio, the girdle of Filiberto and the veil of Cirino, saturated with blood.

The geographers write Trecastagne on the maps as though the village took its name from Three Chestnut Trees, but the learned say it should be Trecastagni—Tre Casti Agni, that is Three Chaste Lambs, after the three saints who rested on the site of the parish church. Their memory is perpetuated also at Mascali, Catania and Lentini. And they are adored at Aci-reale, Pedara and at other places on the eastern slopes, whence the faithful come to their shrine at Trecastagne on the 10th of May.

CHAPTER XX

THE NAKED RUNNERS

One may see in the foregoing story of S. Alfio the foundation of some of the incidents painted on the carts, and perhaps the saints' travelling bareheaded and barefooted is the origin of the people running so to Trecastagne, but I can find nothing in the book to support the belief that S. Alfio was a medical man or that he ever cured anyone of hernia. Nevertheless that he was a medical man, especially successful in treating hernia, is believed by everyone in and round Catania. Fortified by my book I ventured to doubt it and asked my friends in what university he took his diploma. They replied that I was confusing cause and effect ; for in the beginning it was not the universities that made the doctors, it was the doctors that made the universities.

I then pointed out that he could not even cure himself

from the wounds made by the tortures; SS. Peter and Paul had to come to the Roman prison, S. Andrea had to be called in at Mascali and the old man girdled with grace and celestial light at Lentini. But they disposed of this by reminding me that medical men are notoriously powerless to cure themselves.

Then I objected that a saint who was born in 230 and who died in 253 was too young to have got together anything of a practice. They replied that the carts show him exercising his profession.

"Where are these carts?" I exclaimed. "If they are in Catania, let them be called and give their evidence in the usual manner."

So we looked at all the carts we met that were not going too fast. On one of them Garibaldi was landing at Marsala and overcoming the Bourbons at Calatafimi; on another Cristoforo Colombo was receiving a bag of gold from Ferdinand and Isabella, who wanted to put an end to all this wearing delay about the discovery of America; on another Don José was being made a fool of by Carmen in the wine-shop of Lillas Pastia; we saw the enthusiasm of the Crusaders on catching sight of Jerusalem; Otello was smothering Desdemona; we saw the Rape of the Sabines and somebody before the Soldan. But none of these pictures threw any light on S. Alfio.

Peppino Di Gregorio said we must have patience. So we patiently turned down another street and saw King Ruggero dismissing the ambassadors: "Return at once to your Lord and tell him that we Sicilians are not——" something for which the artist had left so little room that it was illegible, but the noble attitude of King Ruggero conveyed the meaning: we saw Mazeppa bound to a white horse rushing through a rocky wood and frightening the lions and tigers; Etna was in eruption; banners were being blessed by the Pope; Musolino was tripping over that cursed wire and being taken by the carabinieri; Paolo and Francesca were abandoning the pursuit of

literature in favour of an eternity of torment—anything rather than go on reading in that book. Still there was nothing about S. Alfio.

They then proposed a visit to the workshop of a man who earns his living by painting carts. We found him at work on the birth of Rinaldo who came into the world with his right hand closed. The doctors and nurses were standing round, wondering ; they all tried but they could do nothing. After eight days the baby, yielding to the incessant caresses of his adorata mamma, opened his fist and lo ! it contained a scrap of paper with his name—Rinaldo—written upon it.

We begged the artist to show us a cart with the Life of S. Alfio, or the designs for such a life. And he could not. He said such carts were rare and he had no designs ; when asked to paint the story of S. Alfio he does it out of his head, putting in anything that his patrons particularly order. We asked how old he makes the saints and he replied that his instructions usually are to make them about sixteen. So that the carts, if we could find them, would not be evidence of anything but the well-known habit of artists to flatter their sitters. Still I should have liked to see pictures of the young doctor, the young surgeon and the young chemist curing patients of hernia and being martyred for the faith.

On the 9th of May in the evening we all went to the Teatro Machiavelli and, coming out a little before midnight, walked up the Via Stesicoro Etnea to the Piazza Cavour. The pavements were lined with people who had come to see the sight and the roadway was left for those who were going to Trecastagne. There were innumerable painted carts, some of them nearly as fine as Ricuzzu's birthday present ; the horses and mules were so splendidly harnessed and so proud of themselves that Peppino Di Gregorio called them " cavalli mafiosi " ; they were driving fast out of the city with coloured lights and fireworks. Every now and then came a naked man running in the road and carrying

a large wax candle. They speak of them as I Nudi, but they were not really naked; they wore white cotton drawers down to their knees, a broad red waist-band and a broad red scarf and some of them wore a flannel jersey. They were all bare-headed and bare-footed, or rather without boots, for they wore socks; this is enough to satisfy S. Alfio, who, being a doctor, does not insist on their taking needless risk. Nevertheless the socks must get torn to pieces before they are out of the town, and their feet must be bleeding long before they reach Trecastagne. Some of the so-called nudi, both men and women, were fully dressed except that they were without hats or boots. They all ran, occasionally they may rest by walking, but they may not dance and they may not stop and they may not greet their friends in the crowd except by shouting "Con vera fede, Viva S. Alfio!" Each of them carries his candle in his hand and it may cost five or ten francs, some cost as much as twenty francs. For days before the festa they go about Catania with trays collecting soldi from all they meet. But if one of them meets the doctor who attended him in the hospital, he is careful not to make the mistake of asking the doctor for a subscription. So they ran and shouted, and I said:

"These are the carts that ought to have the story of S. Alfio. Couldn't we stop one and look at it?"

They recommended me not to try, it would block the stream of traffic and the people would not like it. So we sat in the piazza till about two in the morning and watched them passing.

That was not all we were to see. In the afternoon of the 10th of May everyone who was left in Catania went out towards Trecastagne to see the return of the people, who are said to be drunk after their religious devotions. In order to do this in comfort Peppino Di Gregorio had arranged that we should go to colazione with Giovanni Bianca, a friend of his who has a country house on the Slopes of Etna near the route, and afterwards we would go where we could

see the return of the devout. First, he said, we must go to the station and fetch Joe, because he was to come too.

I said: "With pleasure, but why go to the station? I thought Joe was employed in the municipio?"

"We shall find him keeping order among the coachmen in the station-yard," replied Peppino.

And there he was in the uniform of a guardia municipale.

"Why Joe!" I exclaimed, "I thought you were writing at a desk all day in the Mansion House. I did not know you were a policeman."

He replied that he was a guardia municipale, which is not exactly the same thing, and was going on to explain the difference between the carabinieri, the pubblica sicurezza, the guardia municipale, the guardia campestre and all the rest of it, when I interrupted him:

"I shall never remember what you are telling me; I shall always think of you as a policeman."

"All right," he replied, "I'll be Joe the Policeman, and Ninu is a policeman too."

"I can quite believe it," I said. "When we went to the lava you both treated me just as our policemen in London treat the old ladies and gentlemen who are afraid of the traffic; you helped me along and never let me fall down, and looked after me as though I had been given specially into your charge. London policemen are just like that—very kind and helpful. I know one of them in private life and he is a capital fellow. I made his acquaintance over my bicycle."

"How was that?" inquired Joe. "Did you get run over and did he pick you up? What did I tell you about living on the slopes of volcanoes?"

"It was not exactly that," I replied; "it was because I wanted to avoid being run over that I gave my bicycle to a man to sell it for me when the motor-cars began to get on my nerves, and this policeman bought it. He did not give much for it, but if the value of his friendship is taken into the account I think I made rather a good bargain."

"Tell me about him."

"Oh, there's nothing to tell. He comes to see me sometimes, when he is free. We have tastes in common; for instance, we do not like knock-about brothers at a music-hall—they bore us. And then books; our tastes in literature, however, are less alike; but he is quite a reader. Once he had in his pocket *The Beauties of Nature*, by Sir John Lubbock—that was to improve his mind—and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which he was reading for pure enjoyment. I told him that I also had written a book and he wanted to read it, so I lent it to him."

"I hope he appreciated it?" inquired Joe sympathetically.

"He was extremely polite about it. Next time I saw him he said: 'Well, I've been reading your book'; (he spoke with great deliberation) 'I can get on with it. Yes. It doesn't drag upon me. I don't feel it's time wasted. But, you know, if I ever do anything of that sort, I think it will be more in the style of Charlie Dickens.'"

"I should not call that very polite of him, was it?"

"I am not so sure. We must distinguish. He was not thinking of the Dickens of *Pickwick* with all his beaux moments, he was thinking of that other Dickens of the *Christmas Books* with all his mauvais quarts d'heure."

"But have you two authors named Dickens in England?"

Then I saw that to my audience Dickens was as much a sealed book as Molière and that my literary policeman must be reserved until I can write *Diversions in London*. So I turned the conversation by telling Joe that Dickens is not an uncommon name in England and is a form of Riccardo, as Jones is a form of Giovanni.

While talking we were on our way to Joe's house, where he changed from his uniform to his private clothes, and then we took the tram to Cibali. Here we bought provisions and carried them with us to the country house, which was not yet properly open for the summer. We had picked

up our host, Giovanni Bianca, on the way, and he took us round and showed us the garden, which was full of flowers and fruit trees and vines ; he showed us also the lava of 1669 which destroyed part of Catania. He gave me a piece of primeval lava from the bottom of the well which his father had dug, about 150 feet down. I inquired how old that lava would be. He was not sure, but it would be older than the Romans, older than the Greeks, older than the Sikels or the Sikans.

" Say ten thousand years old," said Giovanni, and he said it without being in the least embarrassed, but then he is not a canonico and has not Moses hanging as a dead weight on him. He went on to say that he did not really know. " The memory of man," he said, " works very imperfectly, and to understand these things one ought to study the science of geology."

In the afternoon we went across country to a spot on the route, past which the people had already begun to come. I asked, what they had been doing at Trecastagne all night. They told me that the journey from Catania takes about three hours, more or less according to the ability of the runner, so that they begin to arrive somewhere about 3 a.m. and keep on arriving all the morning ; and others come from other villages on the eastern slopes. Then they make a row till the church is opened and the nudi go in and light their candles before S. Alfio. Some of them go on their knees and lick the stone floor of the church all the way from the entrance to the altar, but this is being discouraged because it covers the floor with blood and is considered not to be hygienic. Perhaps it might also be well to prohibit the running with bare feet, for that must also make the floor in an unhygienic condition, to say nothing of the roads that lead to the village. Some take stones and beat their breasts, and they all shout continually " Con buona fede, Viva S. Alfio ! " After Mass they dress and eat and drink. Some of them have carried their food on their backs, others have friends who have brought it in their carts, and the

food includes eels, which come from the Lake of Lentini ; thus they enjoy the luxury of eating fish on the Slopes of Etna and moreover fish from the place of S. Alfio's martyrdom. At midday the car bearing the three saints is brought out into the street, but this, it seems, does not interest the nudi ; they have run naked to the shrine, they have lighted their candles, they have performed their vow and are now free to enjoy themselves. Of course, those who suffer from hernia do not attempt to run until after they believe themselves to be cured of that complaint ; but rheumatic patients are often much better after runnng to Trecastagne, the exertion has upon them an effect like that of a Turkish bath, but it knocks them up in other ways.

By the afternoon, when it is time to return, what with the running, the walking, the driving, the fasting, the shouting, the religious exaltation, the want of sleep, the eating and drinking, the fireworks and the jollity of the festa, many of them are drunk. Joe says the festa is a continuation of some Bacchic festival, and this is more than likely, just as it is more than likely that the Bacchic festival was a continuation of some earlier one. He wants S. Alfio to be a transformation of Bacchus, just as Bacchus was a transformation of Dionysus and Dionysus of some earlier divinity, and so on back to him who first discovered wine, ages and ages before the vates sacer who immortalised Noah.

" And how much do the people believe ? " I asked.

" Ah ! " replied Joe ; " who knows ? And what is faith ? "

" I'm sure I don't know," I said ; " sometimes one thing and sometimes another. It is a difficult question."

Then I remembered that he had asked me the same question, and I had made the same reply at Nicolosi six weeks before, and I also remembered something that had happened in between. " The other day," I continued, " I had to wait in the station at Messina, and I asked the porter who was helping me with my baggage whether he

had seen the comet. He replied, ' No, I have not seen the comet, and I shall not even look for it ; I do not believe in the comet.' "

" Oh, well, you know what he meant by that ? He had heard that it was going to destroy the world, so he did not want to believe in it ; he did not want it to exist ; he was not going to encourage such a dangerous phenomenon by having anything to do with it. ' I'll leave you alone and I expect you to leave me alone.' "

" Yes ; I suppose he thought that if he removed his custom the comet would fail."

" Precisely. But it is not quite that with S. Alfio ; they want him to exist ; they are afraid that if they don't believe in him, he will leave off performing miracles and will no longer cure them."

" It seems to me," I said, " that they are dominated by the prepotenza of S. Alfio very much as the sulphur-miners are dominated by the prepotenza of their capo-mafioso."

" With this distinction," he replied, " that the capo-mafioso has the power, and sometimes the will, to hurt them ; it would require a struggle to destroy his prepotenza and there is the risk of failure. With S. Alfio, if they cared to be master in their own house, they have only got to leave off believing in him, there need be no struggle and there could be no risk."

" You speak as though they could believe or leave off believing at will."

" So they can, in the loose sense in which they use the word. They only go on believing because their vanity is involved—it flatters them to attribute the gift of miracles to a creature of their own imagination and, by being satisfied with very little and very poor evidence, they make things easy for S. Alfio. But they could not tell you this themselves, they are half asleep about it."

I said : " Of course they are half asleep about it, and all S. Alfio's interests are bound up in their remaining so. They are not only asleep, they are dreaming, as the Red

King dreamt of Alice. If they were to wake up S. Alfio would go out—bang !—just like a candle."

Alice and the Red King were as unknown to Joe as Poins or Molière or Dickens. I did my best to explain the allusion, but I doubt whether I succeeded, for when I had finished he only said that Tweedledum and Tweedledee had better not go about saying things like that, or their bishop would be warning them to be on their guard as he warned the Canonico Recupero. I must try whether he will understand better if I send him a copy of *Through the Looking-Glass* for his next onomastico. He told me something which makes me suspect that the people must have a dim feeling of how things really are. It seems that sometimes, though rarely, it pleases them to pretend to believe that their padrone has displeased them. Then they half wake up and depose him ; but nothing comes of it, they only choose a new one or, after a short time, reinstate the old one.

We went to a house on the route and sat on a balcony in the sunset and the drunken people pelted down-hill, smothered in the golden glory of the dust they raised, banging their tambourines, blowing their whistles, and singing that now the festa was over they must go home and work to pay the debts it had run them into. It was no more use to think of stopping them to see the pictures now than when they were going out ; so I pigeon-holed what the carts say about S. Alfio with my poor mother's problem about what influence people who never go to church have over their servants. The cavalli mafiosi and the carts were stuck about with coloured feathers and festooned with bunches of garlic, with flowers, with lumps of lard, with little flags and ribbons, with garlands of caruba beans and with vetch. The flags, the ribbons, the flowers and the feathers were, I suppose, for gaiety and festa—pour faire la frime—but garlic has some magically beneficent properties ; not only does it avert the evil eye, it is also a symbol of robust health, so that instead of replying to " How do you do ? " by saying " As right as

rain," they reply, "As right as garlic." They believe that to put three crosses of garlic under the bed of a woman in child-birth will ensure a happy issue. There is something fortunate or healthy also about vetch and, no doubt, some special significance about lard and the beans of the carob. These beliefs are based lower than Giovanni Bianca's primeval lava, and I know no more about their origin than he does, but I suppose they are older than the Romans, older than the Greeks, older than the Sikels and the Sikans—probably much more than ten thousand or fourteen thousand years old. They spring from a soil which has become fertile by catching the dust of ages, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, wherein generations of beliefs have grown up, flourished and decayed. There is no more fertilising manure for a struggling young faith than the rotting remains of a dead superstition. And the roots pierce down beneath the soil and shoot into the crevices of an intolerance more unyielding than buried lava. To understand these things, one ought to become a pupil of Professore Pitrè, and make a study of the science of demopsicologia, and even then one would only get glimpses of the more recent deposits of civilisation that lie crushed one under the other like the parallel surfaces of rich earth in the pit sunk near Jaci.

Whatever the significance of the things they carried or the origin of their belief in them, the people in the carts kept flinging them to the boys in the road, who caught them and picked them up and carried them off to make their festa with them later on. They were all very lively, but no one seemed to me very drunk, not more drunk than the nudi were naked; there were drunken people among them, but not enough to make me feel sure that S. Alfio ought to be identified with Bacchus. One can see more drunkenness on Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday, but one does not hastily identify Saint Lubbock with Dionysus.

CATANIA

CHAPTER XXI

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY

BEING in Catania for Holy Week I went to the cathedral on Palm Sunday. The archbishop in his yellow mitre, red inside because he is also a cardinal, accompanied by nine canons in white mitres and many priests and others, passed out of the church by a side exit and proceeded to the western entrance, which was closed against him. I heard him knock and listened to the chanted dialogue which he carried on with those inside. I saw the great doors thrown open and watched the procession enter and pass up the nave among crowds of people who waved palm-branches.

After this I called at the Teatro Sicilia, the marionette theatre of Gregorio Grasso, and discovered that he was devoting all the week to the Story of the Passion and would begin that evening with the event which I had seen commemorated by the procession in the cathedral. Here was an opportunity to see something which I had often wished to see and about which I had talked with Achille Greco and his sons in their theatre at Palermo, where they also do the Passion in Holy Week, using a play in verse written by Filippo Orioles of which they have a MS. copy ; but they have not performed it recently because it takes too much preparation. Orioles wrote his play for living actors, and it is laid out to get all the events into one performance instead of being a series of seven performances extending over a whole week as in Catania.

Gregorio Grasso took me behind, where one of his assistants, Carmelo, showed me the preparations and told

me about the performance. The first scene was to be the meeting of the Sanhedrin and the beginning of the conspiracy of Annas and Caiaphas to destroy the Nazarene ; this makes a firm foundation on which the rest of the drama is built. The second scene would be the departure of Christ with Mary ; after that would come the Entry with Palms into Jerusalem, and the evening was to conclude with a cinematograph show.

As a rule in this theatre the back scene is only about a third of the way down the stage, the figures appear in front of it and are manipulated by men who stand on a platform behind, leaning over a strong bar which runs along the top of the scene, their heads, shoulders and arms being concealed by a piece of scenery which falls just low enough. The entry into Jerusalem had been prepared behind this back scene ; it was a set group representing Christ on the ass, surrounded by apostles carrying palms, and was to be disclosed by the removal of the back scene, the bar and the platform in front of which the meeting of the Sanhedrin would be shown.

But I was not to witness the performance because Turiddu Balistrieri wanted me to go to the Teatro Giacinta Pezzana and see a special performance of *La Signora dalle Camelie* in which he and some of his family, who are all artists, were to take part. I could not go to both and chose Dumas because, in the first place, being Turiddu's compare it was my duty to support the family. In the second place I had seen the Entry with Palms at the duomo in the morning and had all the rest of the week free to see the marionettes do the rest of the story. So I went to the Teatro Pezzana in the evening. It is a small place, small enough to have been formerly used for marionettes, and was now being used by a Society of Lovers of the Drama. Turiddu was presiding over the box-office and had considered my requirements. He sent me in with his young brother Gennaro, who found me a place, and I saw a play which cannot be considered seriously except as an oppor-

tunity for the actress who undertakes the part of Margherita Gautier. On this occasion it was undertaken by Desdemona Balistrieri, Turiddu's sister, a girl of fifteen years and ten months, two years older than himself; I had never expected to see so young a Margherita Gautier. She gave a remarkable performance with nothing childish about it and nothing—but it would be unbecoming in me to praise the sister of my compare. Her grandmother, the old lady referred to in Chapter XVII (*ante*) who slept in the piazza after the earthquake, was Prudenza, and her mother, Signora Balistrieri, was Olimpia and appeared between the old generation and the young, joining and yet separating them. Turiddu's part was small; he was merely a page bringing a letter or a message.

MONDAY

In the afternoon I went to the Teatro Sicilia and found everything prepared for the evening. Christ and the apostles were sitting at the supper-table as in Leonardo's fresco in Milan; not that they were imitating Leonardo, the early mosaics and the miracle plays, influencing and counter-influencing one another, must have determined the composition of the representations of the Last Supper before Leonardo's time; he was not inventing, he was giving the people something they were accustomed to see and the marionettes were similarly following their own traditions. I do not think the apostles were all in their usual places, S. John was next to Christ, but Judas was at one end of the table—a terrible fellow with shaggy black hair falling over his face—and he had not spilt the salt. There was no salt for him to spill. Signor Greco told me that when they perform the Orioles play at Palermo, they use a horse-shoe table, Judas sits near one end and not only spills the salt, but behaves like a naughty child, putting his elbows on the table and throwing the plates on the floor so that they break. On the supper-table at Catania there

was a wooden model of a roasted lamb, with jointed neck and legs, lying on a dish. There were plates with lettuces cut up, bread and wine, oil and vinegar and oranges, all real. Each apostle had a glass and there was a metal chalice for Christ. I forget all the things that are on the table in the chapel of the Last Supper at Varallo-Sesia, but I remember they have ripe figs, which is a mistake, because figs do not become ripe till later in the year. Oranges are at their best in Sicily in the spring and lettuces are in season. The audience understand this and know that lettuces are appropriate for supper because they contain some narcotic, so that a raw lettuce is often eaten after dinner. The supper had been prepared in front of the back scene, and behind it, ready to be disclosed at the proper moment, was the garden wherein the capture of Christ was to take place.

Soon after seven o'clock in the evening I was sitting in my room at the albergo and saw a great light which I supposed might have something to do with the electric tram. After this I heard a roaring noise which I supposed might be occasioned by an explosive motor bicycle in the street. Then the glass in the window rattled for a considerable time, which I supposed might be due to a slight shock of earthquake. At about half-past eight I went to the Teatro Sicilia. Gregorio and his assistants were all outside, and received me with congratulations on my courage; I was the only one of their patrons bold enough to think of witnessing the performance, all the others had been too much frightened by the earthquake—if it had been an earthquake; and in about ten minutes we shut up the theatre and came away. I went to the Teatro Machiavelli to see what effect had been produced there. There was some anxiety about the phenomenon, but more, it seemed, as to whether enough people would come to make it worth while to have a performance. We were waiting for instructions when someone brought in a bolletino hastily prepared in a newspaper office with an account of the

avvenimento celeste. We sat round and listened while one of the actors read about the convulsion of nature, the trembling of the palaces, the flashes of flame at a great height in the sky, the terror of the inhabitants of Catania. Was the phenomenon of telluric origin—Etna or an earthquake? Was it of atmospheric origin—a thunderbolt or a waterspout? Or could it be a miracle in the dictionary sense of something contrary to the course of nature? No one knew. Gradually a sufficient number of the public overcame their fright and took places in the theatre; and thus I saw a play by Peppino Fazio called *I Delitti del Caporale* of which I have forgotten a great deal, but it contained one incident which I have not forgotten.

There was a scene in the cottage of a brigand who lived with his sister, he was out and she was alone. A corporal of infantry entered and made infamous proposals which she rejected; a struggle followed and was ended by the man shooting the girl through the heart. Overcome by remorse and filled with respect for the dead, he reverently raised the corpse, laid it along the floor by the wall at the back of the cottage and covered it with a sheet. He placed an oil lamp on the floor so that the head, the breast, the hips, the knees and the toes caught the light, while shadows fell in the depressions between. He knelt in prayer and then crept from the solemn scene on which the curtain slowly descended.

We were then transported to a country road outside the caserma of the carabinieri; they were carousing and plotting how to take the brigand. A countryman came and gave information on which they settled a plan of action and the scene ended, but it had occupied a good deal of time and had distracted the mind.

The curtain rose again on the brigand's cottage. Nothing had been moved. Three carabinieri entered furtively, they noticed what was on the floor, lying by the wall, but did not disturb it, they had other business in hand and concealed themselves behind doors and furniture. There was

a pause and the house was very still. The brigand came home, noisily threw down his gun, clanked about the cottage in his great boots, took his knife and his pistols from his belt and banged them down on the table. As he turned he caught sight of the sheet covering something the form of which was emphasised by the oil lamp burning at its head. He did not speak, but surprise and alarm seized him and appeared in his face and in his attitude. He approached it, raised the sheet and with a yell of terror and grief fell on his knees by the corpse as he recognised his sister. The three carabinieri came from their hiding and took him.

It was a typical drama for the Machiavelli. Notwithstanding the want of variety in their plots—and the title of one of their plays signifies as little as the title of a London pantomime—I have seldom passed an evening there without seeing some incident as striking as this return to the house of death. They know how to do these things with a simplicity and an apparent unconsciousness of the effect they are producing which bring with them a strange astonishment.

This was not the corporal's only crime, but to clear up this one it may be added that the hand of the corpse clutched a button which, in the struggle, the girl had torn off the man's coat ; this led to his identification, and in prison he met the brigand, who shot him and thus avenged the murder. I have seen happy endings that were more artificial.

TUESDAY

Compare Turiddu came early to inquire whether I was much alarmed by the disturbance and to tell me what had happened. A bolide had fallen into the Catanian sea—he took me to the port and showed me precisely where.

" It was near that ship," he said.

The people had rushed to the cathedral to pray S. Agata

to avert further harm. They also went to the Piazza S. Nicola hoping it might be large enough to hold them all in case there was an earthquake, for they were all thinking of Messina. The sailors, believing that what they saw fall into the sea was the moon, drew their boats up into safety. The sea did rise, but only eight centimetres, not so much as it would have risen if the moon had really fallen into it. When the newspapers came out I read more particulars: that a barber in the Via Lincoln had been so much frightened that he cut the throat of the customer he was shaving, fortunately, however, no damage was done as the wound was only skin-deep; that a woman ran naked into the Via Garibaldi, not having time in her fright to put any clothes on; that a waiter handing a dish to a lady in the Birraria Svizzera dropped it on her silk dress, which was ruined; and that a priest in the Quattro Canti was seen moving his arms like an electric fan and was heard to exclaim "God save me!" He did not say "God save us" because he was an egoist.

It should be added that the article was written by Peppino Fazio, who confessed to me that though these things may have happened he did not see them. He found them in his imagination. It should perhaps be added further that he knows his public and is not afraid of being taken seriously.

I also saw an account of an interview with Professor Riccò of the Observatory, who stated that an aerolite had fallen out of the profundity of space and that it had not been ascertained where it had struck our planet.

As no one had gone to the Teatro Sicilia on Monday the marionettes were thrown a day late and the programme arranged for the Monday was remanded to the Tuesday, like a festa. I half feared I might be prevented again from seeing it because some friends from England arrived in Catania for the night and I did not know whether they would care to go. They were, however, much interested when I made the proposal. We were rather late, and

missed the Last Supper, arriving just before the curtain rose on the garden. It was a beautiful scene. Christ was kneeling at a rock in the background, the disciples were sleeping in the foreground and the wings were hidden by branches of real trees. An angel descended with a cup from which the principal figure drank. When the angel had departed there was a pause—the lights changed and through the silence we heard the tramp, tramp of approaching people; soldiers came on preceded by Judas, who betrayed his Master with a kiss, Peter cut off Malchus's right ear, the Nazarene was taken and the curtain fell.

WEDNESDAY

Turiddu came in the morning and we conducted my friends round the town. We went to the shop where the old Swiss watchmaker sells the amber of which Brancaccia's necklace is made; we went to the market, where we ate a prickly pear, just to see what it was like, and the man politely refused payment because we were foreigners; in the market also we bought bergamot snuff-boxes; we then showed them the port, where they bought crockery, and the Villa Bellini, where they took photographs; after which we went back to the albergo, where we had luncheon. Then we accompanied them to the station and saw them off for Taormina. Turiddu was as pleased as anyone, he liked making the acquaintance of his compare's English friends and they thought him a delightful boy. Strictly speaking they were not English; the two ladies were Inglesi Americane, which Turiddu said he understood because his mother had acted in the Argentina and, though South America is not North America, it appeared pedantic to insist on the distinction. The two gentlemen, again, were really Inglesi Irlandesi, and here also we were in trouble because he mistook Irlandesi for Olandesi and thought they were what we should call Boers.

After they had gone I went to the Teatro Sicilia to learn

what I had missed by not seeing the Cena. Carmelo told me that when Christ has spoken the words "This is my body" he breaks the bread and gives each of the apostles a piece. Judas does not eat his piece, he steals it and leaves the room. In his absence Christ blesses the wine and gives the others to drink, he washes their feet and they go out to the Mount of Olives. This is followed by a scene of Judas coming to Annas and Caiaphas, showing his piece of bread and telling them that he had heard Christ speak blasphemy. Carmelo explained that the priests were Hebrews—there were Hebrews, he said, in those days, living in that country—and Hebrews believe that bread is the Body of God; therefore for a man—and they thought Christ was merely a man—to declare that the bread was his body amounted to blasphemy. This was evidence against the Nazarene; it carried the story on a step and the plotting priests prepared everything for the betrayal and capture of Christ—the final scene which we saw.

I did not know, or had forgotten, that Hebrews were so particular about bread, but Carmelo assured me that they never throw bread away, and if they find a piece on the floor they pick it up and put it in a hole in the wall and keep it. It may be eaten, but may never be otherwise destroyed. I thought of Ruskin telling his readers in *The Elements of Drawing* that stale crumb of bread is better than india-rubber to rub out their mistakes, but "it crumbles about the room and makes a mess; and besides, you waste the good bread, which is wrong; and your drawing will not for a long while be worth the crumbs. So use india-rubber very lightly."

"Are you a Christian?" asked Carmelo suddenly.

I was not embarrassed. A few days before, when one of the priests at Tindaro asked me the same question, I replied that I had been baptised into the Christian faith soon after birth. The priest said that between the two Churches of Rome and England there were unfortunate differences as to the mysteries but I need not concern

myself with them. "Nature does not believe in the mysteries," said my priest, who was a most friendly person, and as I had been baptised, if I lived a good life, and he was politely certain I did, then I was a Christian. So I considered myself justified in answering Carmelo's question in the affirmative.

In the evening I returned to the Teatro Sicilia ; Carmelo put me into a good place and this time I saw the whole performance. The Nazarene was taken before Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. The priests taxed him with being a magician. Herod proposed that he should perform a miracle if he could, but Christ was silent and did nothing. Herod therefore concluded that the priests were wrong and that Christ must be mad. He directed that he should be clothed in white and taken back to Pilate, and this was done.

We were then in the house of the Madonna, and S. John came and told her and the other Maries all that had happened to her son. Each of the holy women carried a handkerchief and the lamentation became monotonous.

Judas had received the thirty pieces of silver and began his remorse by taking them, in a red purse, back to the priests, who scoffed at him and turned him out. His rage and despair were extreme and gave the audience an opportunity to relieve their feelings by laughing.

Before the last scene Gregorio in his ordinary clothes came on and told the audience the programme for the next day. He also apologised for presenting the Passion with marionettes, he usually performs it with living actors, he himself being the Nazarene. This year, however, he did not feel strong enough to undertake the part or to get all the other actors together ; and he appealed to our consideration and begged us to accept marionettes.

In the days when Giovanni Grasso acted in his own Machiavelli theatre, before he went on tour and acquired his world-wide reputation, they used to do the Passion there also, and he was Judas. Sometimes he doubled his

part and did Annas as well, or Pilate or the good centurion, making any necessary alterations in those places where his two characters ought to have appeared together. It would be a great thing to see Giovanni as Judas, but I suppose he will never do it again.

I noticed that all the figures had been newly dressed and painted for the occasion and the pupils of their eyes were freshly varnished to catch the light. About the soldiers there was still some reminiscence of paladins, but the principal characters had been prepared with due regard to the works of the great masters—though here again I suppose they were really following the traditions of the theatre as preserved by the pictures. The figures gained by hiding their legs, but Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus had not this advantage. They were princes and were like Shakespearean young men of the brilliant water-fly type, such as Osric. Misandro was also a prince. He was a swaggerer and behaved as badly as any paladin, but he was not a buffo. When they do the Natività at Christmas a buffo is permitted, he accompanies the Shepherds as their servant, and I should like to see him. Misandro was all in golden armour, as fine a figure as one could expect a Prince of Judæa to be. He had a contrast in Claudio Cornelio the good centurion. Claudio was left alone with Christ and confessed his faith, while a bright light from the cinematograph box illuminated the stage as though to signify that if we believe, all will become clear. The most successful of the figures was Pilate. He was in black with a red sash and his robes fell in folds of great dignity.

The words were all declaimed either from memory or extempore, and there were several speakers. The one who had most to do did it with a great deal of energy, especially as Judas and Misandro. Gregorio spoke for Christ and a woman spoke for the women and the angels.

The Christ was of course a failure, in art all Christs are failures, even the Christ in the chapels at Varallo-Sesia, even the Christ in the pictures by the masters. The Child

Christ may be a success, at least we can sometimes fancy that that baby might become the Saviour of the World, he reminds us of those babies we have all seen in real life with a look in their eyes as though they had solved the riddle of the universe. But the Man Christ does not convince ; we only tolerate him because we have been brought up to acquiesce in the convention. The Christs of pictures and statues are not, however, such failures as the Christ at Ober-Ammergau ; by keeping still and not trying to appear so real they leave more to the imagination. If all these fail how can a marionette be expected to succeed ? Hiding its legs when it moves is not enough. Gregorio knew he was attempting the impossible and did his best to save the figure from being worse than it might have been, but the result was rather as though it were all the time apologising for having undertaken the part. He made it move very little and very slowly, so slowly that the action of the drama was interrupted. He allowed it no gestures, except an occasional raising of the hand. He spoke for it only the few words given to Christ in the gospels. When it caused a miracle, there came a great light, as when the good centurion confessed his faith, and there was music. When it entered, the drum beat a Saracen rhythm and there was music again. By these means the figure was detached from the others and appeared as though belonging to another world. When the marionettes do the Orioles play at Palermo, Christ speaks much more than the words from the gospels and is treated more like one of the other characters, at least nothing is done to suggest that they are giving the Passion with the part of Christ as nearly omitted as possible.

The music at Catania was faint and scrappy. Gounod's *Meditation on Bach's First Prelude* occurred frequently, but it seldom got beyond the first ten or twelve bars, sometimes not beyond the second or third. And there were similar short references to some of the more sentimental melodies of Bellini and Verdi. It was not intended to distract the

attention ; it was rather to provide an unobtrusive background for the ear against which the voice spoke, as the scenery was a background for the eye against which the figures moved.

THURSDAY

This was the day for visiting the sepulchres in the churches. Turiddu took me to the cathedral, and we saw a procession moving slowly down the nave. It turned up one of the aisles and entered a sepulchre which had been prepared, passing between a double file of dismal creatures entirely shrouded in white except for two eye-holes, like those ghouls that issued stealthily from charnel-houses in German fairy tales, and used to pursue me in dreams when I was a boy. One by one the lights on the altar were extinguished, Phrygian cadences dropped inconclusively from the choir above, the archbishop came out of the sepulchre and the hooded ghosts crept with him. A Dominican occupied the pulpit and began a sermon, but as we could not get near enough to hear what he said, we came away. Turiddu afterwards took me to visit a few more sepulchres, and it was a gloomy business.

In the evening, at the Teatro Sicilia, the curtain rose on Christ bound to the column, and there were two Turks armed with scourges. They did not actually scourge him, it was enough that they told Misandro they had executed their orders. Peter denied his master and the cock crew thrice. While Judas was continuing his remorse, Peter appeared to him, and, confessing his sin of denying Christ, proposed to expiate it by throwing himself into a well ; he tempted Judas to follow his example and preceded him to show the way. But we saw that it was not really Peter, it was a devil. Judas was about to follow the devil when an angel appeared and stopped him. He was to die a different death, and not yet.

A tearful scene between mother and son came next ; I

did not care for it, but the dream of Claudia, the wife of Pilate, was, as Carmelo said, "una visione tremenda." In a dress of scarlet satin trimmed with gold and lace, she sat in an arm-chair in a garden and went to sleep. Christ appeared to her. She spoke to him, but he did not reply, and as she woke he vanished. She slept again, and Annas appeared to her in red fire, threatening her if she yielded to the emotions which the vision of the Man of Sorrows had raised in her heart. She woke in dismay as he vanished. She slept again, and saw Pilate in hell surrounded by devils. She woke in fright. She slept again, and a devil appeared and talked to her, justifying Pilate. S. Michele came and killed the devil.

GOOD FRIDAY

THE Machiavelli was closed. At the Sicilia the performance began with the trial of Christ. Pilate sat in the middle with Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus on his right, Caiaphas, Annas, and Misandro on his left. Beyond Nicodemus was the Nazarene in a red cloak holding a reed and crowned with thorns; and beyond Misandro was Barabbas. Pilate made the opening speech. Caiaphas then spoke for the prosecution; the question in debate was whether Christ was the Son of God, and he accused Christ of being a deceiver. Nicodemus followed for the defence. Then Annas for the prosecution. He said: "The voice of God is the voice of the people." He was followed by Joseph, who maintained that the wonders performed by Christ were not done by magic, they were miracles; that is he was not a magician, he was the Son of God. Misandro spoke last.

Here a messenger arrived from Claudia telling her dream and begging Pilate to go to her. The Court rose and Pilate went home to comfort his wife, while the others talked among themselves just as barristers do in the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand when the sitting is suspended.

Pilate returned and took his seat. He proposed to liberate Christ and to sacrifice Barabbas. He presented Christ to the people, saying :

" Ecce Homo."

And the crowd shouted : " Not this man, but Barabbas."

Pilate ironically congratulated them :

" You are right, O ignorant People ! " and, telling Barabbas to go and thieve again, he liberated him.

Then the false witnesses came. One was a soldier, the other a Turk. They took the oath to speak the truth and nothing but the truth. They were both of them stupid and comic, confused and contradictory, and made the audience laugh, and when one of them admitted that he had been bribed, Annas in his rage gobbled like a turkey.

Pilate closed the debate and washed his hands in a basin held by a servant. Then he wrote the sentence and made Misandro read it. The trial lasted a whole hour, the intention being, I suppose, to reproduce that tediousness which is so characteristic of real trials.

In the next scene Judas continued his remorse and Peter—it was really Peter this time—came and counselled him to ask pardon of Jesus, but he would not listen.

Then came the journey to Calvary and the meeting with the Daughters of Jerusalem and S. Veronica, Misandro ill-treating the women and Claudio Cornelio protecting them.

The last scene was the Crucifixion. The thieves were in place. At the back was the Cross lying on the ground. The figure of Christ was nailed to it by a Turk with a hammer ; the Cross was raised ; Misandro approved ; the Turk gave the sponge ; Misandro reviled Christ, saying : " Thou that destroyest the temple of God and buildest it in three days, save thyself " ; Christ and the thieves held their dialogue ; the Madonna and S. John stood at the foot of the Cross while Christ spoke the sentences and inclined his head. Then there was the earthquake, and we saw the souls in purgatory surrounding the Cross and heard them welcoming their Lord.

SATURDAY

COMPARE TURIDDU came early and we went to the duomo to see the Gloria. The church was full and he told me to be careful about my watch and my money because—" picketi pocketi " ; and then he asked me whether I understood those two words which his mother had brought back from one of her tours.

His Eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop, was conducting a service in a side chapel—blessing the baptismal water, or the font, or both, or perhaps doing something else, for Turiddu is not such an authority on ecclesiastical matters as Carmelo is on matters theatrical. He knows more than I do, however ; it was he who made me go to see the Gloria on the Saturday, without him I should have missed it by waiting till the Sunday. The western doors were thrown open and we looked through into the sunshine and up to the arch that stands at the top of the Via Garibaldi. The archbishop finished his service and returned through the congregation to the space within the rails of the principal altar. Behind him as he stood and concealing the altar and the east end of the church hung a curtain from the roof to the floor. There was chanting and movement among the priests ; they continually kept going and coming, disappearing into the secret place behind the great curtain and reappearing ; they were preparing the mystery. Presently the curtain shook and the congregation understood. The suppressed excitement grew and a murmuring began, caused, I suppose, by everyone telling everyone else, as Turiddu told me, that the curtain was about to fall. Another instant—and its fall revealed the Gloria.

Above the altar was a tomb and above the tomb was the figure of the risen Christ triumphing over death ; in his left hand he held a banner and, with his right, he blessed the people. There were lights, and sudden music from the organ and from the choir ; the deafening bells clanged and, through the great open doors, we heard the sound of

revolvers being shot off into the air and of fireworks being exploded.

Turiddu could not see over the heads of the people; I lifted him up, he looked at the Gloria and turning himself round in my arms kissed me as he said:

"Buona Pasqua, Compare."

Everyone was saying "Buona Pasqua" to everyone else, everyone standing near a friend or a relation was exchanging kisses with him or her as a sign of goodwill; many were weeping for joy, and those who had been quarrelling became reconciled, forgiving one another their offences and entering upon a new life, vowing that, with the help of their Heavenly Father, who had revealed to them the Mystery of the Resurrection, they would from this day avoid all further disputes even though, in order to perform the vow, it should be necessary to avoid one another's company. This is not imaginative writing, like Peppino Fazio's account of the effect of the bolide, it is what I saw —the effect of the Gloria.

And the spirit of the Gloria floated down the nave and through the open doors and out into the piazza, where the elephant of lava stands over the fountain. It passed up the Via Garibaldi, down the Corso, along the Stesicoro Etnea, it spread itself through the city and became identified with the morning sunshine.

"Come along," said Turiddu, "let's go and buy a paschal lamb for mother."

We followed the Gloria into the piazza among the fireworks and the revolvers.

I said: "What about the plates, Turiddu? Don't the people throw the crockery out of window in their joy? We must be careful."

He replied that they only do that in the poorer parts of the town, and they always look first to make sure that no one is passing. But we had better be careful, all the same, because the revolvers are loaded and the squibs are dangerous.

He took me past the municipio, where the band was playing, and we came to a sweet-shop, where paschal lambs made of almond paste and sugar were flocking together on all the tables and shelves. They were not like the one at the Last Supper, they were in their fleeces and were standing or lying among candied fruits and tufts of dried grass that had been artificially dyed unlikely colours. Turiddu chose one, and I sent him off home with it as an Easter offering of goodwill to his mother.

Peppino Fazio was standing at a kiosk near the Quattro Canti with two young cousins, buying button-holes of violas; he gave me the one he had intended for himself.

"Wear this," he said, "it is the primavera. Proserpine has risen from the underworld, she has returned to Enna and is scattering flowers again. Stay; let us exchange; I will take another bunch and you shall pay the man for it one soldo. Buona Pasqua."

So we exchanged bunches. "Wear this," I said, echoing his words, "it is the primavera; the time for visiting sepulchres is over. Proserpine has sent these flowers down from Castrogiovanni by the morning train. Buona Pasqua."

In the next piazza, in the shadow of the statue of Bellini, was one of the men from the Teatro Machiavelli; he had brought out his dog and talked of going a-birding, he hoped it was not too early for quail, he had already seen ripe strawberries in the market. Buona Pasqua.

Then I came upon Joe, the Policeman, keeping order in the street.

He said: "Buona Pasqua. You are very good-looking this morning." He meant I was looking very well, but he will be so English.

I replied: "Buona Pasqua. But, my dear Joe, you ought not to be wearing flowers in uniform, ought you?"

"It is the primavera," he said. He also told me that the revolvers and the squibs and the plates had not done

much damage this year—perhaps ten or a dozen accidents, but none fatal, so far as was yet known.

I went along the Via Stesicoro, not considering my steps because I was looking up the street, wondering how long the Gloria would take to melt the snow on Etna, and I stumbled across Carmelo.

"Buona Pasqua, Carmelo, and have you been to church this morning?"

No, he had been to the port with his friends to see the steamer in which they were to go to Naples; there they would change into another steamer and be taken to the States. They had begged, borrowed, stolen, or, it may be, possibly even earned enough soldi to begin their new life upon another soil and under other skies in a new world. Buona Pasqua.

I returned to the albergo and found that Turiddu had been and had left for me a characteristic Sicilian cake—a ring of bread on one side of which, half embedded in the pasta, were four new-laid eggs. This was accompanied by a note from his mother begging me to accept it as her Easter offering of goodwill. She was telling me more than that the hens had begun to lay again. She was reminding me of how I had seen her at the Teatro Pessana as the link between her mother and her children, joining them and separating them like a passage of modulation. I understood her to mean that for the future I was to see an egg as a transitional something between the hen that laid it and the chicken that will burst from its shell, as a secret place of repose where the one is transmuted into the other, as a sacred temple wherein is prepared a mystery of resurrection. Mothers know some things that cannot be told except in symbolism, and not very clearly then, symbols being as perplexing as unresolved diminished sevenths which may be understood in many different senses. I read the riddle of the eggs in the sense suggested by the context of the Gloria, and I think I read it aright, for in Catania on that Easter morning we were all of one mind, we were all

breathing the Gloria, we were all filled with the spirit of the new life, the spirit that animated also our far-away English monk as he sat in his Berkshire cell making music for

> Summer is icumen in,
> Lhude sing cuccu.

In the evening I went to the Machiavelli. The theatre had been taken by a young amateur who carries on a business of forwarding oranges and other fruit. He gave a performance of one of Giovanni Grasso's plays, *Feudalismo*, part of which I was obliged to see because in the second act there is a song sung behind, and Turiddu had been asked to sing it; on such a day the claims of the family were stronger even than on Palm Sunday. His voice has not yet broken, but if it turns out to be as good for a man as it is now for a boy, he ought to do well with it. I must not continue—it would be more unbecoming in me to praise my compare for his singing than to praise his sister for her acting.

After the song in *Feudalismo* there was time also for the second representation at the Teatro Sicilia. The performance began with the wounding of Christ. Then Annas and Caiaphas discussed the question of whether, after all, they might not have made a mistake in treating Christ as a magician. They had been alarmed by the earthquake, the atmospheric disturbances and the rising of the dead from their graves. Could these phenomena signify that he was the Son of God? And something else troubled them; on consideration they did not like the wording of Pilate's sentence. They went to his palace, but Pilate was not disposed to listen to their objections.

"What I have written I have written," said Pilate.

They had brought the sentence with them and pointed out to him that he had condemned "il Re dei Giudei" the King of the Jews and, inasmuch as condemning a king is a serious step and might get him into trouble,

suggested that for his own safety he should add the letter " o " to the word " Re." This would make it that he had condemned " Il Reo dei Giudei," the Criminal of the Jews. Pilate was persuaded and agreed to add the letter. He went away and fetched his pen, which looked like a feather from the tail of a hawk, and Annas held the paper ; but Pilate's pen refused to write, it was wafted from his hand by a power stronger than his, it hung in the air before their eyes and fluttered away to heaven.

This miracle was accompanied by music ; and, if I had been consulted, I should not have advised the *Marcia Reale Italiana*, because that composition, on account of its inherent frivolity, has always seemed to me unfit for the accompaniment of any manifestation of power. To despise Bellini because he is not Schubert would be to adopt the attitude of the buffo's critic who escaped from Paris in the teatrino at Palermo ; nevertheless the countrymen of Schubert have known how to appear before the world clothed in the solemn splendour of Haydn's majestic Hymn to the Emperor, while the Italians come mountebanking along in an ill-fitting, machine-made suit of second-hand flourishes, as though that were the best they could lay their hands on. They have not done themselves justice. But this is not the place for a digression ; before returning to Pilate and his visitors, however, let me say distinctly that the music was the Italian *Marcia Reale* played, not as the other scraps were played, but with a loud and jaunty heartlessness as though the miraculous pen were jeering at the priests :

" There ! you didn't expect that ; now, did you ? "

Joseph and Nicodemus also came to Pilate begging the body of Jesus. The priests objected, for they had not forgotten the prophecy about building the Temple of God in three days, and they feared trickery. Pilate compromised, granting the request but setting a guard.

Next we saw the Descent from the Cross, effected by Joseph and Nicodemus ; and while the body lay on a

couch, a melancholy Miserere was sung behind. The Entombment followed, the Madonna in black lamenting and weeping.

The last scene was in a wood, where Judas came to finish his remorse. He refused all comfort and all the benevolent suggestions of the angels who visited him. They told him that God is ever willing to pardon the sinner who sincerely repents and freely confesses his sin. It is with God always as it is with men at the season of the Gloria. But the wretched Judas could not think of repentance and confession ; his cowardly soul was not torn by sorrow for past sin, it was paralysed by fear of future punishment ; or we may have been intended to understand that the road to perdition lies through madness. He spoke three sentences, and the last word of each was echoed by a diabolical voice and then appeared written in letters of blood and fire :—Giuda :—Dio :—Stesso. These words made a sentence by themselves and signified : "*Judas* is against *God* and against *Himself*." Faith, Hope, and Charity appeared to him separately ; he would have nothing to do with any of them and they all deserted him. A devil approached and Judas trembled, knowing his time had come. He went and fetched a rope, and with the devil's help accomplished his fatal destiny by hanging himself to one of the trees of the wood, and as his wicked soul came out of his mouth the devil greedily snatched it away and carried it down to be eternally tormented in hell. It was like an untidy black hen.

EASTER DAY

I HAD to go into the country for the night, and so was obliged to miss the Resurrection as presented by the marionettes. I did not, however, much mind, because I had seen the Gloria in the cathedral, where the Christ over the altar was modelled much better than any figure in the theatre. Besides, I called on Gregorio in the course of the

day and had a talk with him and his son, Angiolino, who told me what is done on the last evening of the drama, and showed me the preparations. The first scene, representing the tomb, was nearly ready. After the curtain rises there is an earthquake, and Misandro comes to see whether the watching soldiers are doing their duty; he finds them asleep and wakes them. This is repeated, and the third time Misandro sees the tomb open with a loud noise and a bright light—"like the bolide," said Angiolino. Christ rises, and Misandro, seeing the actual Resurrection, is convinced that Christ is the Son of God and not a magician; he goes to spend the rest of his life preaching the gospel among the heathen. I did not ask what music accompanies the miracle of the Resurrection; I confess I was afraid to do so after what I had heard accompanying the flight of the pen. If I had been consulted here I should have advised silence to suggest that no music could be found suitable for the tremendous mystery that was being accomplished. But I do not think such advice would have been accepted.

Then Herod is ill and commands Pilate to send Jesus to cure him. Pilate commands the priests to produce Jesus, reminding them that he had washed his hands; but each of the priests accuses the other of being responsible, and so they enter upon their eternal punishment of mutual recrimination.

Christ appears to the Magdalene, to Luke, to Matthew and to a contadino. He takes two of them to a tavern, where he breaks bread and vanishes. So they recognise him and go to tell the good news to the Madonna and the other holy women. Doubting Thomas is convinced. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon them and they receive the gift of tongues. The last scene is the Ascension, and Christ as he is received into heaven speaks words of comfort to his mother, telling her it will not be long before she joins him.

The marionettes were behindhand with their Gloria, because the bolide having transferred Monday's programme

to Tuesday had syncopated the succeeding performances into counterpoint of the fourth order, and everything that happened after that was one beat late. Had they moved concurrently with the Church, and reached the Resurrection on the Saturday, they would have repeated it on the Sunday to fill up the time till Easter Monday, when they were to return to *Erminio della Stella d'Oro*, a story of romance and chivalry invented by Angelo Grasso, the father of Gregorio and of Giovanni.

I asked Gregorio where he had found the particulars for Misandro and the remorse of Judas and for the dream of Pilate's wife and the pen that flew away. He replied that he did not know where they came from, they are traditional in the theatre and had probably come out of the libraries. As to Judas and the angel preventing him from drowning himself in the well, I asked whether they have in Sicily the saying about a man being born to be hanged and whether any allusion was intended. Angiolino said they have such a saying, or something like it, but it had never occurred to him to suppose that any allusion was intended, it might be so, but he thought not.

The Christ that had been prepared for the Resurrection in the Teatro Sicilia was not the marionette that had been on the Cross ; the stigmata were there, the spear wound was wanted in the scene with Thomas, and the people were free to take it as being the same figure with all the other marks of suffering removed, or they might think it was a different one, or they might come behind the scenes and find out for themselves as I did. Dwellers in another planet, if they watch the recurrence of the mystery of our spring, may think the flowers they saw sinking into the earth last autumn return again with the marks of decay removed, they cannot come behind our scenes and make sure ; but we know that a new generation is born. The marionettes are not didactic ; if the people choose to see in the Resurrection of Christ any one of Nature's ageless mysteries they may do so ; they may see the birth of the

younger generation, the blossoming of fresh flowers after winter, the awakening to a new day after sleep; or, if they prefer it, they may see the resurrection of their own dead bodies at the sound of the Last Trump—one of those mysteries in which, as my priest at Tindaro told me, Nature does not believe, and with which I need not concern myself.

I do not think they saw in it any of these meanings. At Ober-Ammergau the play is presented so that Mendelssohn need not have hesitated to advise the late Prince Consort to honour a performance with his presence. In the Teatro Sicilia other tastes have to be consulted. I think the audience looked on at the Passion of Christ as they are accustomed to look on at *I Delitti del Caporale* or *Feudalismo* or at the *Story of the Paladins* or *Erminio della Stella d'Oro;* if they suspected any symbolism or mystery, the melodrama with which they were saturated provided a context that determined the direction of the resolution. They saw wicked priests conspiring with a cowardly traitor and an overbearing bully to bring about the destruction of an innocent man. They saw the innocent man passing through misfortune and in the end triumphing over his enemies by means of a happy ending, which reminded them of the happy ending of a Machiavelli play, when the hero returns from prison and the bad people are punished. They saw a mother weeping for her son, but they saw no allusion to Ceres weeping for loss of Proserpine, although their Castrogiovanni was her Enna—just as Angiolino saw no reference to Judas having been born to be hanged, although they have the saying in Sicily, and he is the son of the house. I do not think they saw any significance in the fact that this mystery of the Death and Resurrection of the God is repeated every spring. I imagine that the point made by Joseph of Arimathæa in his speech for the defence, that the wonders done by Christ on earth were miracles and were not occasioned by magic, was lost upon them. It would take a long time to make one of them

understand that la Durlindana, the sword of Orlando, was a magical sword and not a miraculous one. And yet this distinction between miracle and magic was the pivot of the plot as it was presented to them. If they had felt themselves lifted out of their ordinary routine I do not think they would have done what they did after the curtain had fallen on the section of the story presented each evening.

At the Machiavelli they are accustomed to remain for the farce and the Canzonettisti Napoletani which close the performance ; so at the Sicilia they remain for the cinematograph. Every evening during Holy Week the programme posted up at the door concluded with these words " Indi Cinematografo," and there were always three parts to the show. First there was cruelty—victorious tyrants forcing conquered queens to drink their lovers' blood, or some horror of the Inquisition, or the barrel of Regulus bumping down-hill and coming to smash at the bottom. The second part was a modern comedy carried on in Parisian drawing-rooms or on board an electric launch on an American river. The third part was always a wild farce and usually contained an impossible chase. Not till after the cinematograph had concluded its show did the audience go away contented.

ORTIGIA

CHAPTER XXII

O FOUNTAIN ARETHUSE

WHEN " Arethusa arose From her couch of snows In the Acroceraunian mountains " she had scarcely reached the age at which women begin to dream of love. She spied the approaching river-god Alpheus and, to preserve what was dearer to her than life, for she was a nymph of Diana, plunged heroically into the earth. Alpheus, who had reached the age when men desire to act, plunged in after her. They flowed along inside the ground and under the sea, he following her, all the way from Greece to Sicily and, according to the recognised habit of gods and demi-gods believed to be dead and buried, they rose again. The place of Arethusa's resurrection is the island of Ortigia, but, although I have the story from the fountain head, it all happened so long ago that I have not been able to ascertain whether Alpheus rose there or at a spot on the mainland of Sicily nearer Etna where S. Alfio is the patron saint, and although the " e " in Alpheus takes the stress and the " i " in Alfio does not, nevertheless, the custode of the spring, who was himself my informant, may confuse the two names. The difference between the versions is that between tragedy and comedy. If they, the pursued and her pursuer, rose in the same place it can hardly be that he did not catch her. If he rose somewhere else, then she may still preserve her everlasting virginity and they will neither of them ever reach the age when experience teaches both men and women to regret. She will be ever flying, he ever pursuing, like the maiden and the lover on that Grecian Urn which an eminent authority, baffled in his attempts at identification, thinks was " probably imagined " by Keats.

I possess a Bible and Prayer-book bound together in one volume which was given me on leaving Rottingdean by my sincere friend, the master of the preparatory school there. It contains, just before the First Chapter of Genesis, a Chronological Map "with remarkable persons and events collaterally placed." I remember how I used to mitigate the tedium of divine service by reading to myself that the creation of the world occupied one of the weeks of the year 4004 B.C.; that Egypt was founded about 2190 B.C.; that Troy fell about 1180 B.C., seventy years or so before the birth of King David; and that Homer and Elijah flourished contemporaneously between 1000 and 900 B.C. My schoolmaster wrote my name in the book with a suitable inscription and a reference to Psalm cxix. 105. I turned up the passage and drew the conclusion that he desired his gift to be a lantern unto my feet and a light unto my paths. And so it was until other knowledge, the rudiments of which he had himself endeavoured to impart to me, threw glimmerings across my way and I passed through a distracted period of inability to distinguish the signals of danger from those of safety. Much the same thing has happened to many others and assistance has sometimes been found in compromise and accommodation. Thus the statement about 4004 B.C., when read by the light of another statement in the Book, does not seriously conflict with the teachings of modern science. Until further knowledge shall eclipse the few feeble lanterns that are now doing their best to illuminate my course I shall continue to hold the opinion that, as in the sight of Him, who is the Life of the Universe, a thousand years are but as yesterday, so in the sight of man, who has been God's image upon earth for more ages than anyone can tell, six thousand years are but as last week. And I shall keep my thousands in a condition as elastic as may be necessary to bear any stretching that future discoveries may put upon them.

It was many thousands of such weeks ago, when Mother

Earth was herself in her infancy, before her baby bones had hardened, that Arethusa first came to the island she has made her home. She is still coming and can be seen to-day still rising as fresh as ever. The story of the early days of her exile was not told by Clio because Clio was only a modern Agamemnon in history, many a brave muse had flourished before she was thought of. One of them took for her infinite papyrus the firmament of space, those heavens which shall one day be rolled together as a scroll, whereon she inscribed chapters in stars and volumes in constellations. We cannot see all her works, nor can we read all we see, but we know that she put us into one of her books. A few paragraphs of that chapter which forms our planet lie scattered around Siracusa ; we recognise her manuscript in the shape of the Great Harbour, in the depth of the sea, in the height of the hills, in the strata of the rocks, in the soil, in the vegetation.

There were early muses who employed flint implements and arrow-heads for records, and neglected to clear away the remains of prehistoric meals in caverns. Others preferred to write their chronicles upon pots, urns and tombs or to scrawl placid monosyllables upon polygonal walls. But with all their industry the muses have never been able to keep pace with the material that has accumulated round the dwellings of men and women. They have done their best and, when their mother Mnemosyne began to fail and the business was split up first into three, then four, seven, eight, and ultimately into nine departments, it was hoped that a better result would be shown ; but they have never had an adequate allowance, and have always been in financial difficulties, besides which they have disagreed among themselves, and quarrelling wastes time.

Clio in her matter-of-fact way built a storehouse wherein to preserve her treasures ; her curious, imaginative sisters peeped through the key-hole.

"Dear me!" they said to one another. "What a

collection ! Do you think we could get inside and see it properly ? "

They waited till Clio went one day with Neptune to pay a visit to the Ethiopians " who lie in two halves, one half looking on to the Atlantic and the other on to the Indian Ocean," they induced Vulcan to come and pick the lock for them and soon they were roaming all over the palace.

" How admirably arranged ! " exclaimed one of them.

" It must be nearly exhaustive ! " said another.

" Observe the collateral placing of remarkable persons and events," said a third.

" One could find almost anything one wanted," said a fourth.

" Ah ! " they exclaimed ; " ah ! now if only we could manage to get a little life into some of these dead bones, how pleased Clio would be ! "

They rifled the show-cases and carried off the most attractive details, each taking whatever pleased her best. They stole from Clio her transient facts and made them live again as their own by breathing into them the spirit of eternal truth and re-stating them in folk-lore, in tradition, in verse, in romance, in melody, in superstition, in outline, in colour, in modelling, in the movements of the dance ; they set them up in libraries, in concert-rooms, in picture-galleries, in theatres, in churches, in corridors of sculpture, in the hearts of the people. This was not what Clio had intended ; she was not at all pleased ; she complained that her sisters had meddled, they had robbed her of her chief possessions and left the remainder in disorder ; her collection no longer corresponded with the catalogue. In attempting to reconstruct she floundered into such blunders that the saying has come down to us : Blessed are the people that have no history, for they shall not be misrepresented.

Strictly speaking, of course, every man has history, such as it is, and the beatitude was intended to refer only to those whose history has escaped the attention of the muses

as that of Arethusa did for many ages. We know enough, however, to guess that her exile cannot have been passed in solitude and, if only we had her Visitors' Book complete, we should have something that would keep many learned persons busy. We get an early glimpse of her on her underground journey, passing near enough to the dread abode of Pluto to overhear some scandal about—

> That fair field
> Of Enna where Proserpine, gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
> Was gathered.

She did not fully understand, but the nymph Cyane, who dwelt in another fountain up the river Anapo and remembered the affair, gave her full particulars; she made a mental note of it all and imparted the information to Ceres, who came weeping and telling her grief as she wandered the world in search of her lost daughter.

Venus, in one or other of her manifestations, was and is a welcome visitor; she rises from the sea as constantly as Arethusa falls into it, and some little time ago gave the nymph, for a keepsake, a portrait of herself as Venere Anadiomene done in marble. I know enough about painting not to be afraid to own that I know nothing about it, whereas with regard to sculpture my ignorance is so unfathomable that I can have no hesitation in saying what I think about this statue, which is that it is a pity it has been broken. If only it had its head and its right arm it would be an entry of which the owner of any visitors' book might well be proud. It is now in the museum of Ortigia, where there is also a marble portrait of Cupid as he comes riding into the Great Harbour mounted on his dolphin's back.

Diana, sailing through the night, seated in her silver chair, comes regularly to Ortigia. Arethusa always receives her with the respect and honour due to her Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair. Some centuries ago she

built her a temple with Doric columns and everything handsome about it; she put inside it a statue of the goddess, and the people forsook their old deity, whatever she was called, and went to the new temple worshipping Diana.

Phœnician traders came and did business with Arethusa, some of it not very straight business; for Ctesius, the king of the place, had a woman-servant, very tall and comely, who was from their own country; they cajoled her in ways that no woman can resist and, partly by means of "a necklace of gold with amber beads strung among it," induced her to go away with them one evening, and she took with her out of the palace three cups and the king's son, a child just able to run about. She may have thought of taking the boy because she had herself been kidnapped from Sidon, brought to Ortigia and sold to Ctesius. Before they had been a week on the voyage, Diana struck the woman dead and the traders threw her body overboard to the seals and fishes. We should never have known her tragic end but for the fact that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman jealous for the honour of her sex. The boy was afterwards sold to Laertes, the father of Ulysses, in whose service he put on immortality as the swineherd Eumæus.[1]

Early Greeks also did business with Arethusa and left with her vases, gold rings, glass beads, ivory combs and other objects which she still preserves in her museum. Later on, in quite modern days, about the time that Rome was being founded, less than eight centuries before Christ, other Greeks came from Corinth, turned out the Sikels and established a colony of their own in Ortigia.

After this Arethusa was no longer among those who have no history in any sense of the word. The records become less scanty, even voluminous, and they are more legible. The books are full of the great names of her visitors and of those native to her island. We read of the Tyrants, of Æschylus and Pindar, of Theocritus and Archimedes; of

[1] *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, by Samuel Butler.

the great siege when the Athenians failed to take the city ; of Cicero coming to view the locality when preparing his speeches against Verres ; of the five parts into which ancient Siracusa was divided, namely, Ortigia, on the island, and those four others with the beautiful names on the mainland, Achradina, Tyche, Neapolis, Epipolæ, the memory of whose former splendour still trembles among their ruins.

I do not know whether Ptolemy Philadelphos actually visited the nymph, but I have read somewhere that the papyrus which now grows where she rises was originally a present from him. It does not look so healthy as that which grows in the Fontana Cyane up the river Anapo across the harbour, and which he also sent to her.

About three hundred years after the statue of Venus was made, S. Paul, being on his way to Rome, was shipwrecked at Malta, where he remained three months. He sailed away in the *Castor and Pollux* of Alexandria, landed at Siracusa and tarried there three days. We know what S. Paul must have thought of Diana from the account of what happened at Ephesus, where the goddess was also worshipped ; it is probable that he was among those who disbelieved in the eternal virginity of Arethusa, and he surely must have disapproved of the frequent visits of Venus and Cupid. In time the people of Ortigia professed themselves converted to his views and made a change, but they made it in a half-hearted way ; for instead of pulling down the heathen temple, so that not one stone should be left upon another, they allowed the Doric columns to remain and merely filled up the intercolumniations with building material and baptised it into the Christian faith with a coat of whitewash and a new name. In other respects they went on very much as before.

Saracens visited the nymph, and Normans ; Egyptians, Germans, Goths, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Albanians all came and all bequeathed some record of their coming. Many of them left their autographs written one over the

other upon the forms and features of the ancestors of those who still have their dwelling in her island.

Lord Nelson on his way to the Nile, where the papyrus came from, sailed into the Great Harbour with his fleet and did business with the nymph. He wrote to Sir William and Lady Hamilton:

> Thanks to your exertions we have victualled and watered; and surely, having watered at the fountain of Arethusa we must have victory.

What a picture these words call up of Arethusa welcoming Nelson's jolly tars! They are coming in their pinnaces and filling their barrels and kegs with the waters of the sacred spring and, as they row back across the harbour to the ships, one can almost hear them singing of "Tom Bowling," "Black-eyed Susan" and "The Roast Beef of Old England."

I have myself seen the German Emperor visiting Arethusa. His yacht, the *Hohenzollern*, was in the Great Harbour, and one afternoon I watched his suite being put ashore in little boats, like Nelson's sailors, only there was no singing, and presently he came in a little boat and they all drove away in carriages to the Cappuccini, where I read in the *Giornale di Sicilia* that they inspected the latomia and took tea. They passed quite close to me and, although I had never seen His Majesty before, I was bold enough to raise my hat to him; he observed my salute and most affably returned it. I thought him looking extremely well.

The Kaiser landed at the Passeggiata Aretusa, a promenade that runs under shady trees between the Great Harbour and the cliff on which the city is built. It leads south to a garden, and further progress appears to be blocked by a buttress of the cliff; but the buttress is pierced by a tunnel, through which a path leads to another garden lying in an enclosure protected from the harbour by a wall which encircles it; the wall slopes down and on the top of it runs a path up which one can

walk and so enter the town without returning through the tunnel.

In this enclosure is the famous Fontana Aretusa, but there is nothing about it that reminds one of the fountains of the Crystal Palace or of Versailles. One first catches sight of a pond and then of a spring bubbling into it with irresistible volubility at the north end; at the south end the water tumbles out into the harbour through a hole in the sea wall. The surface of the pond is below the level of the passeggiata and probably the bed of it is below the level of the water in the harbour, so that, as Cicero observed, it is the wall that keeps out the waves and if the hole had been pierced lower the pond would be submerged by the sea. On the sides of the cliff and on the wall grow plants with aromatic leaves and flowers, and one can walk round the pond and watch the fish which are, or ought to be, the descendants of those which Cicero saw, as they swim about among the roots of Ptolemy's papyrus. The water is not now used for washing, but I suspect that the Sidonian woman who stole the little Eumæus was so using it, for she was washing near the ship of her countrymen when they got into conversation with her, and their ship would be moored in the Great Harbour, close by the fountain.

I drank of this water, following the example of all visitors and of many of the inhabitants who believe it to produce a beneficial effect upon the digestion. It may have been good enough for Nelson, and I trust that the digestions of his sailors derived benefit from it—anyhow, they had victory at the battle of the Nile—but for a modern Londoner, accustomed to do business with the Metropolitan Water Board, it is too salt, which is perhaps why the papyrus here looks less flourishing than that up the Anapo. The water tastes as though Arethusa had been the heroine of another story besides the one with the uncertain ending about Alpheus—one with Neptune as the villain and an ending tragic enough to justify S. Paul in his

attitude towards the nymph. Some who adopt this view suppose that Neptune's designs were forwarded by an earthquake which, they think, must have occurred since Nelson's time, because he speaks as though he gave his sailors the water of the spring ; but that is not enough to date the disturbance. It is some distance from Greece to Sicily, and along all those miles, during all those ages, there may have been many earthquakes, any one of which would have served Neptune's turn ; some may have been before S. Paul's time, some before Eumæus was born, some in still earlier days. If the earthquake had already been, Nelson must have observed the brackishness of the spring and he would then have preferred to take his water from the usual fresh source which supplied the inhabitants of his day, and, in speaking of "having watered at the fountain of Arethusa," he would be trusting to Lady Hamilton's familiarity with that figure which permits the part to be put for the whole.

I have visited Arethusa many times. Once, on a calm evening in early summer, Diana was high up in the sky, shining over the harbour ; although, like others, she may not have been sure which was her temple and which was Minerva's, she could not help wondering whether anything was ever going to be done about openly restoring them both to their ancient worship. She was, however, comforting herself in the meantime with the reflection that neither she nor Minerva had much to complain of, inasmuch as it was clear that if it were not for the support of those Doric columns the modern Church would not stand as it does, and after all, she thought, "What's in a name ?" Down below in the passeggiata, officers and young men were strolling about, listening to a pot-pourri of *Faust*. Their cheeks were shaved smooth to show the modelling and their moustaches gave evidence of hours of toil and even suffering ; they met their friends and gesticulated with them, smoking cigarettes and being polite to everyone. Mothers and elder sisters in cool white dresses sat under the trees,

and little parties of children darted away from them, hand in hand, returning after breathless excursions. I took a seat among it all and, as the King of Thule, in honour of his lady, was drinking for the last time out of his golden cup, a young voice over my shoulder demanded two soldi. I turned and thought I recognised the speaker; surely he must have left his dolphin in the Great Harbour where the Phœnician traders used to moor their ships, and put on his sailor suit at the Custom House.

"Very well, Cupid," I replied, "I don't mind giving you two soldi, but why do you ask as though you were entitled to them? And why do you wear that red tam-o'-shanter? And how old are you, if you please?"

He said he was seven and the cap was his uniform; he was collecting the pennies for the chairs. So I gave him two soldi and another for himself and saw him scamper happily away and join a knot of brother Cupids who were playing together round a lamp-post. He showed them the soldo I had given him for himself and the meeting became as ebullient and full of excitement as the Arethusa herself.

He reappeared while Siebel, with the voice of a clarinet, was beginning to tell the flowers what they were to say to Margherita. This time he brought a foreign penny and wanted to know why they had refused to take it at the marionette theatre. I looked at it and said:

"If you want to know about this coin, mount your dolphin again and direct his course to distant Argentina, the people of that country will tell you all about it and will give you its full value. You will have a delightful voyage and, if I were not such a bad sailor, I believe I should ask you to take me with you."

It seemed, however, that his dolphin was tired and I was to give him ten centimes down and done with it. He was such a jolly little fellow that just for the pleasure of seeing him smile again I gave him the soldi in exchange for his coin and he danced away in delight.

Margherita in prison was crazily recalling the strains of

the waltz she had heard—Ah, what ages ago it seemed !—when she was yet a happy girl, as pure as Arethusa in Hellas, and through the waltz I heard the young voice again over my shoulder. He was asking me to give him bronze for an Italian nickel piece of twenty centesimi. It was a bad one. I told him so and accused him of attempting to utter counterfeit coin. He laid his two hands on his breast, raised his elbows, threw back his head with conscious innocence and swore on the honour of his mother that the coin was good. He did it so well—so beautifully—that for a moment I was tempted to wonder whether he might perhaps be speaking the truth, but I glanced again at his coin and recovered myself.

" Now look here, Cupid," I said, " I don't want to breathe a syllable against the honour of your mother, but you know better than anyone that when a woman loses her head you are generally to blame. This is your doing "—and I took out of my pocket and showed him a post-card I had bought that morning in the Via Roma with a reproduction of the Venere Anadiomene. " And men also have lost their heads because of you. I am not the only one who has heard about the Duca di Bronte and Lady Hamilton. Look round at these beautiful ladies and at these brave officers and young men—do they not bear upon their forms and features the signatures of Arethusa's foreign visitors ? You ought to be able to decipher that palimpsest, if anyone can, for it was you who taught them to write ; Ortigia would never have seen them if it had not been for you. And why are they sitting under the trees and walking about in the moonlight, do you suppose ? "

He replied that they had come out to listen to the music and he wished there were more of them because then he would get more pennies.

" What ! " I exclaimed ; " people who do not even recognise a modulation to the dominant when they hear one come out to listen to music ! You know better than that. They have not come out because of Gounod, they

have come because of you. It is always the same old story. It was your fault that Alpheus chased Arethusa out of Greece and that Proserpine was carried off from Enna. It was you who suggested to those Phœnician traders that the nurse of the little Eumæus would be good company for them, and you who made her consent to go. This music, of which I should have heard more this evening but for your frequent interruptions, you were at the bottom of it all. And it is because you are always hanging about the theatre that those wretched puppets are so constantly going mad for love of one another."

He pouted and said I was making myself disagreeable and that there had been plenty to praise him.

I replied: "Yes; you swallow the praise, but you won't listen to the blame."

He said that as for the praise or the blame it was nothing to him one way or the other. He was too much interested in the future of the race to care about any of those old stories—they bored him—and, please, wouldn't I leave off preaching and give him four soldi?

I replied: "You have immortal youth without the troublesome necessity of periodically dying and rising again; on that stage of the world where we mortals, untrained amateurs, improvise the drama of our lives, you have always been behind the scenes, inspiring and stage-managing more history and more poetry than has ever been written; without you Clio would never have built herself a treasure-house or, if she had made one, her sisters would have found in it nothing worth stealing; it is you who direct the modulation from the old generation to the young; it is your voice that is heard every Easter behind the bells and the music of the Gloria. And now you ask for riches! No wonder we complain that you are unreasonable. Can you not be satisfied and, in looking after the future of the race, put a little more variety into its history and its poetry? Why do you so often begin a story as comedy and end it as tragedy? It is unworthy of you to play fast and

loose with us ; great poets do not do so. But there ! you are too young to know what conscience is, and I am afraid you are too old to learn."

He replied that he was not accustomed to be talked to in this way and did not know what I meant by it.

I said : " Very well, I will leave off preaching, and perhaps you will allow me to conclude with a piece of advice that ought to be acceptable to one whose ambition it is to become a millionaire. You cannot have forgotten where you put your mother's hea '. Now, be a sensible boy for once, run away and find it, take it to Dr. Orsi up there in the museum and he will give you plenty of soldi for it—more than you can count, and no questions asked about honour."

He laughed and said I seemed to take a good deal of interest in the personal appearance of his mother who, he thought, could be trusted to look after herself, and that so long as a woman's heart was in the right place it did not much matter what she did with her head. Besides, even if he were to find the head, he knew nothing about business and a scientific man in a museum would be sure to get the better of him.

There is no resisting Cupid, so I let him think he had got the better of me, gave him four soldi and added his coin to my collection of similar pieces, while he frisked away back to his friends boasting of his success, as Cupid will. He had not quite done with me, however, he came once more to see whether I should be likely to give him a cigarette, but a rough man caught him, told him not to worry the gentry, boxed his ears for him and drove him from me.

Fancy boxing the ears of a young Greek god off a dolphin's back within sound of the Fontana Aretusa !

And yet, perhaps the rough man was right. I have sometimes thought since that it cannot have been really Cupid who came to me that evening ; I must have been wasting my time and money, as others have done before, upon some false god, false as his counterfeit coin, one of those who go

up and down the world seeking whom they may despoil. Well, let it be so. One does not keep an account of the hours and minutes one spends in a country where the existence of time is scarcely recognised, and as for the money—of all the multitudes of men who have been fooled by Commerce in the guise of Love only a few have had the luck to escape with a total loss not exceeding four-pence half-penny.

THE END